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BOSTON.

"SIRS, ONLY SEVENTEEN!"

BY

VIRGINIA F. TOWNSEND

AUTHOR OF "MOSTLY MARJORIE DAY" "A BOSTON GIRL'S AMBITIONS"
"THE HOLLANDS" "THAT QUEER GIRL"
"ONLY GIRLS" ETC.

LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS

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SIRS, ONLY SEVENTEEN

ELECTROTYPING BY C. J. PETERS & SON, BOSTON, U.S.A.

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*To some Names,
Not written here;
But which mean to me
A world happier and dearer.*

V. F. T.

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“SIRS, ONLY SEVENTEEN”

I

THE FAMILY TREE; THE SAPLING BOUGHS

“EVERYBODY,” Dr. Edward Everett Hale says, “cannot live by the road which leads to Lexington.”

Dorothy Draycott did.

She was conscious of the fact too. It seemed to her it was the best place to live on the planet; she had a secret feeling that she must have been a different sort of girl if she had not been born and nurtured on that old historic highway.

Sometimes she would wake in the early morning from the sound sleep of young girlhood and perfect health, and half imagine she heard the tramp of the long British column shaking the ground like thunder as it hurried past on its way to Concord; she would see the flashing of the bayonets, the gay banners waving over all the scarlet bravery; and she would hear the beating of the drums, filling the air of that bright, soft April morning more than a century ago.

Dorothy had a good many traditions and events of

those days stored away in safe corners of her young memory. The house where she had been born and lived all her life occupied the site of an older homestead over whose threshold her great-grandfather had passed to join the minute-men mustering, since early dawn, to the call of the alarm-bells; not dreaming — those Massachusetts yeomen — how from all their village belfries was ringing out the reveille of a new dawn of freedom to the world.

Dorothy could have pointed out to you in the garret roof two old rafters, so worn and weather-beaten that they formed a marked contrast to the later timbers. One of these rafters held a bullet; the other bore marks of several. Both had been taken from the house where the elder Draycott generations had lived and died; the family having immigrated to this country in the decade which followed the one whose greatest glory is the sailing of the little bark *Mayflower* with its precious freightage of one hundred and two souls from the old English seaport of Plymouth.

Among Dorothy's earliest memories was that of an afternoon when her grandfather had taken her up to this garret and showed her the old bullet-pierced rafters. Then he took her on his knee and related the story of the British march from Boston to Concord, as he had learned it from his own father, who had borne a conspicuous part in that day's events.

The story had made a profound impression on the eager, sensitive child, as she sat on her grandfather's knee in the dim, dark-raftered garret, and drank in every syllable, while his white, handsome old head leaned down to her glossy young one. What a long while ago it seemed! She had hardly reached her fourth birthday then; and she had passed her seventeenth now. Dorothy felt old when she remembered that.

She was a slender, tallish girl whom I must leave to speak mostly for herself in this little drama which is to occupy only a few months of her life.

Many people called Dorothy Draycott pretty, but there were those whose glance was most penetrative, and whose feeling for words was finest, who rather indignantly denied this — people who insisted that the girl was beautiful with that rare kind of beauty which unfolds and ripens into a slow, far womanhood, and which is of such intrinsic quality that it ends only with life.

Everybody admitted, however, that she had a beautiful-shaped head, which carried fitly its mass of rich young hair, its darkness all alive with flashing bronze tints whenever the sun had a fair chance at it; her olive skin, too, was of fine texture, and had a wholesome clearness. Her features were delicately moulded, but not small — these not belonging to her ancestral type. Her mouth was large, and it had its pouts and its grave lines, but smiled often;

and when you saw the smile you forgot the red of the lips, and the perfect teeth behind them. Her eyes had the dark rich shade of ancient much-polished mahogany; but here, again, you did not oftenest think of their color, because of something which lay behind that, and was their life and glory.

Dorothy Draycott was an only daughter. She had one brother—a Harvard undergraduate—two years her senior, who was the pride, the delight, and torment of his young sister's life.

As they were very clever young people, running over with gay spirits and love of fun, they were always matching their wits against each other—sometimes one and sometimes the other getting the better in their verbal combats.

An only daughter, and her father and mother would have said to themselves—such a daughter! Dorothy had been much petted and indulged; but her parents were too sensible to spoil her. There was stuff in the making of this girl, too, as you will find out, not easily spoiled.

Dorothy Draycott was, however, unspeakably fortunate in having such a father and mother. He was a man in his prime—a broker in Boston. He had inherited those homestead acres which had so immensely increased in value since the first Draycott settled on them, before the middle of the seventeenth century. The rest of his fortune—it was by no means a conspicuous one—Donald Draycott

had, by his own business shrewdness, amassed for himself. He had the reputation of a man of sterling character. Those who knew him best pronounced him a rare, noble-souled fellow. He, like his son, had gone to Harvard; and his early predilections for a scholar's life had survived all the wear and tear of business, and saved him from making his stocks and bonds the idols to which soul and body must be sacrificed.

"Of course, I might have been a richer man, Grace," he would sometimes say to his wife, "if I had put my heart and soul into the money-grubbing; but in case I had turned you out a millionaire there would have been nothing left besides."

"I never pined for millionaires!" Mrs. Draycott would reply gayly. It was her secret conviction that she had won the greatest matrimonial prize in the world—not the mightiest intellect certainly—but the truest and manliest, the most tender and lovable of men.

As for his wife, no words could express Donald Draycott's estimate of her. She had what her friends called a singular loveliness of character. Her husband believed all that was best in himself was owing to her influence and companionship. Whenever he hinted this, she repelled it as a great injustice to himself. But he stoutly maintained his point, asserting that the old Draycott breed had its vices, and that another could not know, as their descendants

did, the weaknesses and quicksands of his own nature.

Grace Draycott had a great charm of personality. She was a blonde, not above medium height, with strong, delicate features, and eyes large, and of a sea-gray tint and depth. But the best thing still remains to be said of her face. Into its smile and expression, even in repose, a beautiful soul had crept.

The daughter resembled her mother in various ways — so subtle, however, that they did not strike one at first sight, for the Draycott type was pronounced in Dorothy.

The house, seated on a terraced elevation, commanded a wide, picturesque scene, made up of woodlands and glints of river and neighboring towns and villages, framed by the far hills on the horizon. Nearer at hand the windows looked down on the broad storied highway, and on the roofs of Arlington, nestled cosily in the lap of its hills.

It was a wide, double house, this home of Dorothy's, built half a century before, solid, square, spacious, and much in the pattern of the late colonial period. It was bisected by a wide hall, with sunny ample rooms on either side. A broad slope of front lawn was broken up with masses of shrubbery and flower-beds, which held gay bloom from early May to November frosts. At the back was an immense garden, full of ancient fruit-trees, and flowering thickets, and rows of bushes, with summer-houses and

rustic seats, and all sorts of attractive little nooks and alleys.

The interior of the house was delightful. Its tasteful furnishings, its books, pictures, bric-a-brac, scattered everywhere, gave character and refinement to the rooms, while a subtle, restful home atmosphere pervaded the whole.

The English Draycott had named his American estate Red Knolls. The family tradition, well authenticated, ran that he had gone over the land the first time in the early June, when some knolls in the upper pastures were smothered in a mass of wild-brier-rose bloom. The great red glow caught his eyes on the instant. Before he purchased the land he had decided on its name. The wide pastures had been turned into waving grain-fields; but the knolls still remained, and from their summits, one, looking eastward, had in clear atmospheres glimpses of gray-blue sea. Of all that glory of red bloom only a few straggling briars now remained; but they held up in the face of each June a handful of wild-roses, bright and fragrant as any in those Junes of two centuries ago.

At the time when this story opens, Dorothy had been mistress of Red Knolls for several months, while her brother called himself, with an air and look of meek endurance which of course deceived nobody, its "long-suffering and sorely henpecked master."

Mr. and Mrs. Draycott were spending the winter in Southern California. She had taken a severe cold in the autumn; and, when her cough grew wearing and obstinate, the doctor had insisted upon a prompt change of climate.

Mr. Draycott had at this time business relations on the Pacific coast which made his presence there desirable. The two left soon after the holidays.

Their absence really involved a domestic revolution. The mother had consented to it after many misgivings and at her husband's persistent entreaties.

The pivotal question was how to dispose of the young people at this juncture. Their elders were most reluctant to break the continuity of the delightful home-life at Red Knolls. Tom was within half an hour by electric of his Alma Mater, and Dorothy could, of course, keep on with her studies.

It was decided that Red Knolls must, at all hazards, be kept open, and the young people put on their mettle.

A widow from the Vermont Hills, whose orchard and dairy had long furnished Red Knolls with their choicest products, was induced to leave her home for the winter, and undertake the domestic supervision of the household.

She was a treasure in herself, this small, bright-eyed, soft-stepping Vermont woman, with a heart as tender as ever beat in a human bosom, and a practi-

cal faculty, a keen observation, and a quaint humor, which showed a marked individuality.

Deep in her fifties, regarding herself a part of her pleasant home among the hills, the removal to Red Knolls for the winter was an immense change in her life. Nothing but her regard for the young people could have induced her to make it. They had walked into Mrs. Dayle's heart during the many happy, rollicking weeks which they had passed in their childhood, in the homely, delightful old farmstead. A man and a maid, each long-tried and trustworthy, completed the winter household at Red Knolls.

One evening — to go a long way back; for it must have been less than a year after Dorothy sat on her grandfather's knee, and heard the story of the Revolution — Mrs. Draycott, entering the child's room before her early bedtime, suddenly paused. Dorothy had not caught the soft footfalls. She was standing by the window, the little brown restless head thrown into sharp relief against the lace curtains, while she murmured to herself in her clear, childish soprano, —

“Good-night, little girl, away up in the star! It's bigger than our earth, Tom says, for all it looks like such a mite shining up there. Little girl, away off so high and so far, I hope your world is as nice and as dear as mine down here. I just think and wonder about you every day. I

hope you have a father and mother as good as mine, and a big brother you love dearly, though he's got such a temper, and makes you awful mad at times! I suppose boys who live in stars have tempers; but if they don't, and your brother is best, I wouldn't want to change, you know.

"It makes the way not seem so long between us when I think the same God made you and me, and takes care of us both.

"O little girl, you can't hear what I say; but for all that I mean to come each night, when the clouds are gone, and send you, away up in the sky, my kiss and good-night!"

That evening Mrs. Draycott related what she had overheard to her husband.

"Of course I was inexpressibly touched and charmed," she said. "But, O Donald, such an imagination is a perilous gift!" and there were tears in the young mother's beautiful eyes.

"That depends, Grace," said the husband in his manly, reassuring voice. "I trust there is some grit in that little makeup, that will show itself when the test comes, and save imagination from running away with her."

II

SEVENTEEN AND NINETEEN

“GIRLS and Greek go to the dogs!”

With this ejaculation, rendered more emphatic by the silence into which it exploded, Tom Draycott sent his Sophocles spinning across the room.

Dorothy looked up startled from the drawing on which she had been at work for the last half-hour, only pausing occasionally to study intently her brother's profile at the opposite side of the table. Then she would resume her work with a little mischievous smile hovering about the corners of her mouth. Nothing had broken the stillness but the ticking of the clock on the mantel, and the humming of the wood-fire on the hearth.

Tom had been buried in his Sophocles as Dorothy had in her lessons. She was intending to enter Smith College next fall, and went into Boston every other day for two hours' recitations. On this occasion, however, Tom's profile had proved so tempting a study that she had at last pushed aside her books, and stealthily, and with a merry glint in her eyes, set herself to drawing it.

It was a March evening. The wind was wander-

ing like some restless, bewildered creature outside, its low mutters sometimes rising into an angry menace.

The library where the two were sitting was a large room, oak-panelled, lined on one side with low bookcases. The prevailing tone of the room was gray, with reliefs of brighter color in table-scarfs, cushions, and lounge-covers. In the corners were two or three choice bronze groups, and a number of fine paintings and landscapes on the walls; but any inventory of furnishings in this apartment, as in that of every other of the solid, ample, half-century mansion, must miss the home atmosphere which was its real attraction.

"What is the racket now?" Dorothy asked, and the next moment she was ashamed of herself. She meant to keep her talk intact from Tom's Sophomore slang, but she was always slipping into it.

Tom Draycott sprang with an impatient growl to his feet, and ran his fingers through his hair.

"Racket, indeed!" he retorted. "Here I am drudging away at that confounded Greek, when I ought to be at the play to-night. It is a capital thing, Walters says. He wanted me to dine with him at Parker's, and then go to the show. It was rough on a fellow to give it up."

"But will you tell me what girls had to do with the matter? I suppose, though, you mixed them up with it from mere force of habit."

“*One* girl had something to do with it—with a vengeance! If she hadn’t tried the injured-innocence dodge and talked of her two evenings alone the last week, and all that nuisance, I should have cut Greek, run my chances at recitation, and gone to the play.”

In spite of his ungracious way of putting it, Dorothy perceived that her brother had made a sacrifice, more or less, for her sake; and with a sudden grateful impulse she exclaimed:—

“Tom, dear old fellow, you may growl, but you have been awfully good. I will tell mamma when I write.”

Tom Draycott adored his mother, believed her the most splendid woman in the world, but his young man’s conceit was rather nettled at her introduction at this moment.

“So that is the way my goodness is to be in evidence! Tell his mamma how he stayed at home with his sister, and was a good boy; a model, in short, for brothers, so long as time shall last. What taffy, Dorothy!”

“Well, then,” arching her eyebrows significantly, “if you are to be the model for all future brothers, good angels protect the sisters!”

Tom laughed good-naturedly this time. He was standing with his back to the fire now, a stalwart-built, broad-chested fellow of a decided blond type, with no resemblance, on the surface, to his sister;

although the family likeness occasionally came out in flashes and glimpses.

Tom's glance happened to fall on the drawing which lay upon the table.

"What have you been doing there?" he asked, with a kind of languid curiosity, as he drew nearer to the table.

"You mustn't look! It isn't finished. For shame, Tom! You have no right to it."

Dorothy's remonstrant staccato burst out as her brother picked up the sheet and coolly proceeded to examine it. He recognized the drawing at a glance. Dorothy had a dainty touch combined with a power of bold, vigorous lines. Here was a likeness, undeniable, slightly caricatured, of himself. The nose — not an insignificant feature in Tom Draycott's facial structure — was unduly prominent, and so were some locks of hair which stood up, bristly and pugnacious, on his forehead.

Tom whistled, half amused, half provoked, for a minute, perhaps, as he inspected this drawing, which was not complimentary to himself; then he, with cool deliberation, tore the paper into several slips and tossed them into the flames.

"Tom, how dared you do that? It is shameful; it was not yours," exclaimed Dorothy in high dudgeon.

"And how dared you take such an unwarrantable liberty with my countenance, and caricature it at

that? How would you like it if I tried the same game with you? Here goes!"

He made a dash for the pencils; but Dorothy was too quick for him, swept them up, and held them close, box and all.

"There!" exclaimed Tom triumphantly. "Nothing convinces, in a case of this sort, like turning the tables handsomely on another."

"But you are a fellow," said Dorothy with a marked change of tone, "and of course wouldn't mind. A girl might."

"You are immensely positive about what a fellow would mind!"

Dorothy was silent for a few moments. Each of these young people was wise enough to know when the other had the best of the argument; but many a discussion, begun in pure love of mischief, ended in something quite the opposite.

Dorothy gazed at her brother with silent intentness for a minute or two. He knew her well enough to be certain there was a thought behind the gaze, and that he would hear it before long. He turned meanwhile, and stirred the red coals with the poker until the sparks swarmed up the chimney like a flock of scarlet bees. The thought burst out in the form of a question, spoken with grave earnestness.

"Tom, do you really think you are handsome?"

"I never gave that important subject much reflection." He had on now what his sister called his

"owlish expression," and he struck the forelog with a force which sent a fresh scarlet flock swarming up the wide chimney.

"Because you are *not* — really!"

The tone was so serious, with just a hint of apology, that Tom could not take umbrage at this frankness. He rose, however, turned and faced his sister, and again the bright, penetrating, critical gaze went over the strong, stalwart figure, taking it in from head to foot, with all the details, — the color of the hair and eyes, the moulding of the face, the yellowish down cropping out on the chin.

"May I ask if you have just arrived at that conviction?" he interrogated with the utmost gravity.

"Oh, no. I reached it more than a year ago."

"Indeed! This begins to be interesting, at least to the party most deeply concerned. Under what circumstances did you form a conclusion so flattering to myself?"

"It was more than a year ago. Don't you remember that time when we came down from the mountains, and drove over from Woodstock to the Profile? It was in September. We had seats on the top of the stage."

"I remember — perfectly."

"Of course everybody was wild to go outside. There were several Harvard fellows amongst the crowd, and we all had the jolliest time. I think it must have been the others set me to thinking about you — contrasting you with them."

“Not to my advantage evidently.”

“I said, ‘I am going now to look at Tom critically, just as though he were not my own brother, and I saw him for the first time. There he sits before me, — Tom Draycott, — a big, strong-limbed, straight-shouldered fellow, a little overgrown,’ — that was more than a year ago, you remember. ‘Not a model of grace, perhaps, but with a figure tall, robust, well-formed, that any youth might be proud of.

“‘He has a large head, well-shaped, well set on his shoulders; but when you come to his thick hair it is inclined to be coarse and bristly, and of a light squash-yellow. His eyebrows and short thick lashes are about the same tint; and his eyes, though they are bright and clear and full of fun at times, are of a light, uncertain sort of gray. Indeed, there is altogether too much neutral tint about him. When it comes to his features, not one of them follows the curve of beauty. They are large, his nose especially; and it isn’t straight, either, and the whole is cut on a rather rugged plan. His mouth is too large, though I am forced to admit when he smiles one does not think of that. If his skin isn’t fine its wholesome, ruddy hue more than atones for that. His ears stand out too far, and are apt to be reddish, and no drawing-master would ever take them for a model. In short, that is a fair if not flattering picture of your brother, Dorothy Draycott, as he sits there before you at this blessed moment!’”

The young man, quiet as a mouse through all this speech, broke now into a roar of laughter; he shook; he shouted; he doubled himself up, and then stretched himself on the lounge and roared again. It was mirth, pure, simple, infectious. In a few moments Dorothy, who had been very serious through the talk, joined in, and her girlish laugh formed a silvery, rippling accompaniment to her brother's bass.

At last Tom grew quiet, and spoke, —

"And there you sat all the time in the midst of that wonderful scenery which Starr King declares the finest between the Atlantic coast and the Rocky Mountains, while you contrasted the Draycott biped, masculine, with the feminine variety. Oh the enormous vanity of girls!"

"I did nothing of the sort, Tom. I have half a mind not to tell you, after that speech, what further conclusion I did form regarding you."

"Oh, let's have the worst now! My *amour propre* can stand anything after this onslaught. I take back all I said, Dollikins."

"I said to myself, 'These other fellows may be handsomer, but Tom is conspicuously, intrinsically the gentleman among them. Anybody with a fine sense must perceive that. It is in the lines of his face, the carriage of his head, in, as papa would say, "the molecules of his organism."'"

Tom rose from the lounge and made his best bow.

"I needed some emollient after all those dreadful wounds to my vanity," he said dryly. But Dorothy knew the words covered some real satisfaction, and that her last speech had atoned for all which had preceded it.

Then the bronze clock on the mantel struck the half-hour. It was the time when Dorothy usually went to her room; her mother having exacted a promise that she would keep early hours.

At this instant Mrs. Dayles put her face inside the door to see that everything went well with her young charges. Even to a stranger, the kind motherly face under the gray hair, the small, neat, matronly figure, would have been attractive.

Hidalgo, who had been asleep on the rug, woke up now, stretched his huge length, and laid his big head affectionately on his young master's knee. He was an English mastiff, a splendid creature, and of enormous size.

He had been shipped from Spain when a young dog to Mr. Draycott, by a friend who was about to make a trip around the world. The dog at once became an immense favorite in the family; he had the intelligence, the deep loyalty, and all the fine characteristics of the best of his breed. "What a superb creature he is," remarked Donald Draycott to his wife one day, soon after the dog's arrival, when there had been some discussion about naming him.

"It seems," she answered, "as though he had

lived long enough among those stately old Spanish hidalgoes to carry their air of solemn dignity through all his days.”

Donald Draycott brought down his hand on his wife's knee. “Grace,” he said, “you have hit the mark! That name suits the patrician creature exactly. Come here, sir!”

The dog came, gazing at the man with his intent, solemn eyes. “You are from this moment to have one name — to know and to answer to that only so long as you live — Hidalgo!”

Tom and Dorothy clapped their hands, and the dog soon answered to his name.

Tom Draycott heard the March wind booming outside. The sound stirred his young pulses like a trumpet. He was always eager for a tramp, either with or without companions.

“Come, Hidalgo, you and I will have a bout with the winds!” he said.

And nodding good-night to the young girl and the elder woman, who were absorbed in some domestic discussion, Tom Draycott went out with his dog into the wild March night.

III

A ROAD, A RIDE, AND SOME RHYMES

YOUNG Draycott had stumbled one day, by the purest accident, on what his sister regarded as the most precious secret of her life. Even her mother had no inkling of it. Tom had gone to Dorothy's room to relate some amusing affair at lectures that morning. There was no answer to his knock; but Tom was sure of her return in a short time, and neither would have felt any scruples in entering the other's room, and awaiting its occupant.

He threw himself down in a big bamboo easy-chair, his favorite lounging place in his frequent visits to his sister's room. Her davenport—a dainty affair in oak, with antique carving—stood near at hand. Tom's attention was caught by something on the upper shelf of the davenport, which resembled an oblong volume in a pinkish-gray silk binding, with the prettiest light green vine, brightened by clusters of berries, running around the edges. He at once perceived Dorothy's light, firm touch in the painting.

Tom Draycott had the instincts of a gentleman. He would never have used anything of his sister's which she intended for no eyes but her own, although

he would have been quite ready, in one of his teasing moods, to make a pretence of doing it. But this thing, lying there in full view in its pretty case, roused his idle curiosity. It never crossed his mind that Dorothy could have the faintest objection to his examining it. He reached forward, took it up, found it thick, rather heavy, and with a glance inside, recognized his sister's clear young girl's hand in the closely written manuscript.

Before he had read a syllable she came into the room, with her light, rapid step, her velvet cape loosened from her shoulders, her little toque, with its old-gold and crimson trimmings, atilt on her young head.

She glanced at Tom; the next instant she saw what was in his hand. She darted forward with a cry of anger and dismay to seize the book. But in her wild haste she missed her aim. Tom sprang from his chair, and swung the book triumphantly over his head.

"Oh, how dared you do that? It is my own. Give it to me this moment," burst out Dorothy, her voice quivering with excitement, her face aflame with distress and anger.

"Not until you have told me what this is," replied Tom coolly, his curiosity thoroughly aroused now; and then, he was barely nineteen—it was hard to miss a chance of teasing his sister.

Dorothy drew her slender figure to its full height.

The lightnings of her great brown eyes blazed into Tom's.

"You are the meanest, most prying, most impudent creature I ever conceived of! I demand that you give my property back to me."

Tom, getting angry himself, managed to hold his temper in leash.

"Adjectives of that sort, accompanied by that tone, are not apt to have the desired effect," he said in a dry, aggravating voice, keeping the book at a safe distance.

Dorothy looked at it with hungry eyes for a moment, then she broke out, "I would not have believed you could do so contemptible a thing, Tom Draycott."

She quivered all over; but there was some pain in her voice, which struck Tom now, and put him on his defence.

"I have done nothing to be ashamed of. I happened to find this thing— whatever it is—lying on your davenport, and, naturally enough, took it up, when you must bounce in and raise such a tempest over it."

But Dorothy was not to be reasoned with, so long as he held her treasure above his head in that defiant way. If she could only have thrown her young girl's strength against his, and in one passionate wrestle have torn the thing from his hands! But that was hopeless. "It is mine. Give it to me!" she

repeated insistently. The hungry look in her eyes made Tom relent a little.

"If you will tell me what this mysterious affair is, I will give it up."

"What — what do you *know* about it?" asked Dorothy, not replying to his question, but with a fresh blaze in her eyes.

"Know! I know absolutely nothing, except the confounded fuss that you have been making over it. I tell you I haven't the remotest idea what is inside of this. It may be Sanscrit."

Dorothy shot one eager, doubtful glance into his face. In the sudden relief and reaction she sank into a chair and burst into sobs.

Tom saw the matter was more serious than he had imagined. He drew near his sister and exclaimed in a half remonstrant, half annoyed tone, —

"What a silly, unreasoning, explosive creature you are, Dorothy! Tell me what it is all about, and I will give it back to you and welcome!"

"It is my book — my very own," she sobbed.

This obstinate persistence disgusted him for a moment; the next, it all cleared up in a flash. The thing he held in his hand was Dorothy's in some intimate, sacred way which nothing else could possibly be. This was the explanation of all her passionate insistence.

"Dorothy," said Tom, in a changed tone, "you have been writing a book!"

She gave a little cry that was almost terror. Then she turned on him.

"And you told me you had not read a line! O Tom Draycott!"

This time he had the advantage. "Do you suppose, Dorothy, I would speak more than the absolute truth?" his voice rang out resentfully. "I could not tell the first syllable inside this cover if it were to save my life."

He laid the book in her lap.

Dorothy seized and hugged it fast.

Tom's feeling toward his sister had undergone a swift transition from the instant he had solved her mystery. He had more sympathy with her feelings, too, than she could have imagined. In his own room, locked in an inner bureau-drawer, was a small portfolio containing certain sonnets, lyrics, and verses, which no human eye had ever seen. These were the efflorescence of Tom Draycott's youthful muse. The thought of any of his classmates getting hold of them would have made him wince in every nerve.

But for all that he could not resist such an opportunity of having his jest.

"I had no idea I stood in such a presence," he began with mock seriousness. "Long and green may your laurels wave, Miss Dorothy Draycott, authoress!"

"There, I knew you would make fun of me!" she cried, her cheeks flaming.

“I promise, honor bright, never to do so again if you will tell me the title.”

“O Tom, don’t ask me, please.”

“Well, then, be good after all this big tantrum, and read me the first page.”

The young head went back and forth in speechless, but very pronounced, negation.

The utmost concession Tom could extract from his reluctant sister was that she had been more than a year writing her book, and that not a soul knew of its existence.

Tom, of course, kept his sister’s secret inviolable; but it was not in young masculine human nature not to have its fun out of the matter. He seized occasions for gravely inquiring whether the book was of the ideal or realistic school; whether it was a study of to-day, or of some remote period of human history; he was curious to know, too, whether the story were a novel and a local study, and who were the *dramatis personæ*, and if these included any people whom they knew.

But Dorothy was on her guard now, and quite equal to keeping her own counsel, as well as answering all her brother’s ironical compliments to woman authors.

One day when Dorothy had a cold, and could not go to her lessons, Tom, returning from Cambridge, brought to his sister’s room a mass of trailing arbutus, every spray in loveliest flowering.

The sight of the little white and pink blossoms — those earliest of all the flowery train of the summer — gave Dorothy immense delight. With a joyous cry she buried her face amongst the small posies and drank in their fragrance. A little later she was arranging them in a great Japanese bowl.

“O Tom,” she exclaimed, “you are the dearest fellow in the world to bring me these! Ask me anything and I will do it for you.”

“Anything, and stick to it, Dollikins?” queried Tom, using the pet household name of her childhood; but there was a glint in his eyes which put Dorothy on her guard.

“Of course I shall, Tom, — to anything you have a right to ask.”

She came over now, and placed the bowl with its mass of trailing green and bloom opposite to him on the table. How pretty she looked in her house-jacket of rose-pink! Even Tom’s accustomed eyes took notice of that.

“And who is to decide about the right of the question?” he pursued, lifting his eyebrows.

“I must, in the last resort. That is only fair, you know.”

Tom saw nothing was to be gained by discussing the matter.

“Well, then, here goes! I ask you, Dorothy Draycott, to read me the last chapter of your own book.”

Dorothy’s face fell. “O Tom, ask me anything but that!”

"Well, the title, then, if it suit you better."

Dorothy was certain that Tom could never resist quizzing her mercilessly if she placed such a weapon in his hands; she was in a mood to gratify him, but the book — the first child of her imagination — was very dear to its creator. The thought of anybody criticising — making sport of it — brought a recoil so sharp that it was almost a pain. She could sooner bear cruel blows on her tender flesh.

"Oh, I can't do that!" she said in a rapid, almost passionate tone. "If you should ever write a book, Tom," catching his disgusted look, "you would understand how I feel."

"How we seventeen-year-old authors do plume ourselves on our superiority to common clay!" retorted the disgruntled youth. "But I have had my lesson. The next time I go foraging Cambridge-town for trailing arbutus, in a March gale, it will be for somebody a little more appreciative."

Tom started for the door. But his shaft had struck home. Dorothy glanced at her flowers, and her heart and will relented a little.

"Tom, don't go off in a pet!" she exclaimed appealingly, as the door swung open.

He paused on the threshold. "I have no more time to waste with such a mulish little minx," he said.

"O Tom, is that being a gentleman — to call your sister names?"

"Of course not. You better let me go before I commit a second offence."

"But I will forgive you, if you will come back, and perhaps tell you something in connection with the book," this last half to herself. "We sha'n't be happy if we quarrel, Tom."

"Probably not. But you are so aggravating, Dorothy, and I am not a saint."

He came back, however, and with a half-resigned, half-grotesque gesture resumed his seat.

Dorothy did not speak for a minute or two. Then she began in a slow, embarrassed fashion, but she soon lost all that in the interest of her narrative.

"I am going to tell you, Tom, how the last of my book came to me. I shall never forget that day if I should live to be an old woman — wrinkled and gray-haired, you know. I had been almost a year writing the thing. Of course, it had to be done when I could get the time all to myself, so nobody would suspect. And there were always so many things coming up to interfere — lessons, company, walks and drives, girls — oh, you can't imagine!"

"Yes, I can," said Tom, quite mollified now; "and I am ready to admit you were a clever little puss to carry the thing through without anybody's getting an inkling of it."

"But those last two chapters were the worst. I came to a dead stop; I hadn't the dimmest thought — not the ghost of an idea — how the story was to

end. I wished, many a time, it was at the bottom of the sea, and made up my mind to burn it up, and so have done with it; but the hour never quite came for doing that.

"One day things seemed to have reached a climax. I was just in despair. The only comfort was I had the afternoon to myself. Papa and mamma had gone to Brookline to a wedding, and you were off at some big class-game. Everything was perfect for several hours, and I sat down determined to write or — die! I couldn't do either. I wondered if grand authors ever went down in such collapses. I didn't envy them their genius or their fame, if they had to pay such a price for it. Then the worst of all was, the book wouldn't let me alone. It haunted me everywhere. It seemed to stand right before me, like some live, pleading thing, saying, 'What are you going to do with me? You have brought me so far; you must take me to the end!' Oh, it was awful!"

Dorothy paused a moment and shivered a little; but, once started, she found it an immense relief to confide these experiences to a listener.

"At last — it was late in the afternoon," she resumed, "and I had torn up almost a quire of paper, — I got desperate, locked my davenport, made a vow to myself never to touch the book again, flashed into my riding-habit, and five minutes later was cantering off on Sphinx. In a little while we were racing over the old country roads. I never minded where we

went; I wished I could get away from everybody, everything, and ride on forever. In a little while the book ceased to worry me. I didn't care what became of it. Then, in a flash, on some old country road, with only an occasional sleepy farmhouse, the whole thing came up to me. It was clear and natural as daylight. I saw the characters, the scenes, the grouping, and just how it was all to end. The wonder was, why I hadn't thought of it before.

"Sphinx had her own way for the most part, that afternoon, and chose her own roads and went like the wind. We must have been off several hours, when I woke up and stared around me. I was sure we were miles from home, the daylight was fading into dusk, and there were clouds — heaps, amber and pink — I see them now in the western sky.

"You may believe, Tom Draycott, I wheeled Sphinx sharply round, and started for home on a gallop. I remember how glad I was that papa and mamma would not return until late, else they would have a scare over my absence; but though I had lost my way and was out alone in the growing dark, miles from Red Knolls, I was just the happiest girl in the world because my book had come to me. Of course, we passed farmhouses, and occasionally some wagon or a stranger on foot; but I shrank at that hour from pulling up and inquiring the way, and at last we turned into a road where there was a sign-

board, and I made out we were about six miles from home.

“After that, we tore along in the stillness and the moonshine until we came to Belmont. I could make a short cut by turning into the road which leads up to Arlington Heights. I can see that long, rugged stretch between the old pasture-slopes as we galloped into it, — the full moon overhead, the shadows black against the silver lights, — the wild-flowering bushes on the roadside, and the brown old highway winding and shouldering itself up the hill. It was a glorious sight, and as solitary as though I were miles from a human being or a habitation; though a few rods off would have brought Boston into full view with” —

“Pretty place for a girl at that time of night!” growled Tom. “Suppose a tramp, or several of them, had turned up on that lonely road.”

“But they didn’t, you horrid prosaic creature! Something did appear, however!” an exultant smile coming into her eyes.

“What was it?”

“A great secret. One nobody ever heard.”

“Well, let me be the first fellow to have it then.”

She gazed at him doubtfully. But her late confidences made others easy.

“I shall trust your honor, Tom.”

“That goes without saying.”

“And you promise never, under any circumstances, to make fun of this?”

"I promise absolutely. But you are not such a goose as to mind my chaffing?"

"I should care in this case."

"Well, you will never have a chance. Now about what came to you that night. Was it bogie, dryad, ghost, revisiting the faint glimpses of the moon?"

"O Tom, how ridiculous you are!" her laugh rang out a gay negative. "It was" —

"Well, don't keep a fellow on the rack."

"It was only a few couplets which sang themselves into my thoughts as we galloped along through the lovely stillness — the glorious moonlight. I don't mean I haven't touched up some of the lines since, but the ideas and the rhymes came to me then."

"I see. All the circumstances tended to kindle the latent muse."

"Tom, you promised!"

"I am not making fun — not the slightest. I am in dead earnest. Come — Out with the poem."

"It is such a very little one," said Dorothy; and a flush crept up and deepened in the young olive cheek.

After the first line or two, her voice steadied itself: —

"O goldenrod, how your tall ranks glowed
Like lanterns alight on the Belmont road !

"O daisies, how dainty and dim and white,
Your disks gleamed out from the grass that night !

“While — lovely ghost of the vanished day —
The moon was climbing the skies’ stairway.

“On pasture slope and on cedar steep
The winds from the sea had gone to sleep.

“Fine scents were alive in the summer air,
Cool dews were asparkle everywhere.

“While I rode to a glad refrain which run,
‘Oh, road to Belmont, my book is done!’”

There was a little silence when the sweet, vibrant voice ceased. Then Tom spoke.

“Very fair for a first try. I say, Dollikins, rest of the book up to that?”

“I don’t know.” A little shadow stole over the glowing face. “I did my utmost at the time, but I begin now to see — faults. Perhaps I shall write it all over again sometime.”

“And you are bound to give a fellow no chance to draw comparisons between your poetry and your prose?” interrogated Tom tentatively.

At that instant they were summoned to lunch.

IV

HOW THE HOUR STRUCK

THE next morning before leaving his room, Tom Draycott thrust his hand into the pocket of his trousers. These had been hanging in his closet through the extreme cold weather. He felt a bit of paper, which, brought to light, proved to be a bank-bill. Tom spread it out, whistling over some college tune.

“Just two dollars luckier in my exchequer than I supposed! I suppose now the sight of you would elate some poor devil of a fellow, if he sprung on you as I did!”

Then, by some subtle law of association, a sermon flashed up in Tom's memory to which he, with many of his classmates, had listened a few days before. The sermon had been specially addressed to those on the threshold of young manhood, and was charged with all the solemn earnestness, the intense sympathy, the spiritual fervor, of the speaker whose own Harvard youth — so few decades before — must have dwelt vivid in his memory. With the force of a great personality, he asserted the power of righteousness, the ideal of Christian manhood, the joy and inspiration that come of a pure, generous, high-purposed life.

As he glanced over that young, breathless audience, his words rang out with passionate conviction and eloquence. All the depth and tenderness of his great nature were stirred, as he thought of those young men, with their lives before them, and of the awful tests waiting to try soul and flesh in a little while.

Tom Draycott, like many of his classmates, carried away from that hour some fresh inspirations of thought and feeling; some deepened sense of the real values of life; a conviction more or less earnest that character was, after all, the supreme thing in the world.

Though the feeling would lose its fine edge amid the frictions of every-day life, it would be certain to recur at critical moments. Tom Draycott — careless, high-spirited, fortunate youth — found the scene, the sermon, the preacher, starting up with curious vividness as he stared at the bill.

He stopped whistling; he said to himself with a mixture of jest and seriousness, “Some other fellow — the first I come across, who, it strikes me, needs you more than I do — is going to have you! I’m rather hard up just now, and every dollar tells; but I shall be as well off as I was before I discovered you.”

He slipped the money into his waistcoat-pocket, where he could come at it easily, and it passed from his mind.

That day young Draycott happened to be in Bos-

ton, on some errand which had taken him and a classmate into one of the crowded thoroughfares north of School Street.

As they were hurrying along, Tom caught sight of a youth, hardly as old as himself, but of a strong, robust build, standing before a refectory window where various sorts of appetizing food made a tempting display.

A glance over the figure, from the worn cap, the threadbare coat and trousers, to the shabby shoes, told its own story. The light had struck full on the youth's profile, and Tom had caught something wistful and hungry in its expression.

"Bet my head that poor fellow had no breakfast," he said to himself; and it occurred to him that was a state of affairs which his own experience hardly admitted of his imagining. Then his resolution of the morning flashed across him. Here was his chance! If only his friend were a hundred miles off at that particular instant!

The pair turned into Tremont Street. Then Tom broke out.

"See here, Seward! I must rush back on some errand for an instant. Keep straight ahead, and I'll be up with you in a jiffy," and he was gone before his rather surprised classmate could utter a syllable.

The boy—he was really one still—had turned away from the window, and was moving along the sidewalk, when a strong hand was laid on his shoul-

der, and a pleasant, hearty voice, a little imperious, was saying, —

"Turn straight about, go inside, and get you a square dinner, instead of staring at one through the window. Here's the money to pay for it too!"

Before the dazed youth could speak, could even collect his wits, the money was in his rough hand.

He stared in dumb bewilderment into the young face, hardly above his own; he saw the merry, kindly eyes; the next moment the speaker was hurrying away.

For an instant the boy stood transfixed. Then a swift change, a deep scarlet, struck through his tanned cheeks; he started for the stranger, ran against and came near upsetting two or three people on the crowded sidewalk; he came up with young Draycott, just as the latter was turning into Tremont Street.

Tom, not altogether pleased, saw him at his side, —

"Well?" he said hotly.

"What made you do that?" asked the youth, his eyes riveted on Tom's face.

"Perhaps you know about as well as I do. I saw you standing there, looking in at the window, and I had had my breakfast, and it struck me that you might not have had yours. That's about the size of it!"

It was Tom's cue to treat the whole matter in

a light, off-hand way, much as a joke. The boy understood. A new look came into his eyes. The whole expression of his face changed.

“It was a devilish kind thing to do!”

If the adjective was ambiguous the tone was not.

Tom's laugh was a pleasant thing to hear.

“I must rush. A fellow is waiting for me. Good luck to you and your dinner!”

Tom rejoined his puzzled classmate. The whole incident had not occupied five minutes. But a great deal for two lives was to hinge on those few moments.

V

A CRITICAL FIVE MINUTES

ONE evening, two weeks later, Tom Draycott had a long tramp by himself.

It was a night in early April. The year's white slumber was broken at last. The wide air, the great brown earth, were haunted by some prescience of that mighty life-wave which would soon be throbbing at the heart of things. A tingling restlessness, a thirst for freedom and vast-stretching space in which to disport themselves, was in all young blood of human and brute creatures. The day, with its sunny warmth, its languorous air, its deep, radiant sunrise, belonged to the climate of late May, and frosts and flurries of snow would be likely to follow weather so out of season.

Tom Draycott's young blood had shared the restlessness which was in the air. He had walked for miles in the still, beautiful April night, with a full moon regnant amongst her stars. All the trees and shrubs were bare still; but each twig and bough and bole stood out sharply defined in the moonshine which was flooding the land with a weird, solemn splendor.

Tom had his tramp all to himself, not even his shadow, Hidalgo, accompanying him. Dorothy, going to spend the evening with her most intimate girlfriend, who made a great pet of the animal, had carried him off with her.

It was getting late in the evening when, about two miles from home, young Draycott found himself on a road which, followed for a short distance, would lead by rather sinuous and rugged ways to the foot of Arlington Heights. A fancy seized him to see the city with its line of brilliant lights, and its broken masses of roofs, its towers and spires, from the crest of the hill. But it was probably less with an eye to the picturesque than with an instinctive desire for prolonged motion that the muscular, vigorous youth continued his tramp.

Before he had gained the summit of the hill, he remembered that he was in close proximity to the road over which Dorothy had galloped on that memorable night when she finished her book. By the time he reached the crest he forgot all about the glittering panorama of the city, and, passing a few houses on his left, turned into a wide, sloping highway. Tom Draycott was on the Belmont Road.

It stretched long and brown before him between the rugged pastures and scant woodlands which flanked it on either side. How silent the old road was! A hush, like a spell, lay upon it. Who could imagine that the vast city, with its beating,

hurrying, tides of life, was so close at hand! The shadows of birch-boughs, barberry clumps, and tangled blackberry vines were pencilled in strong relief against the moonlight. The gray old roadsides would soon be wearing all their bravery of summer wild-bloom.

There must have been such a moon as that overhead, Tom thought, when his sister galloped Sphinx over the road. He heard Dorothy's girlish voice going over the rhymes again. He remembered what scant praise he had awarded them. He might have been more generous, he thought.

The spell of that April evening was upon him — its stillness, its beauty, its divineness. His thoughts came and went in the radiant silence about him, "the long, long thoughts of youth," reaching out to far spacious horizons of hopes and dreams and ambitions. A softer mood came over his spirit than was common to his proud, dominant young manhood. Then the look of amazement and gratitude which he had seen in that boy's eyes when they had that odd meeting near the corner of Tremont Street came up to him. Indeed, it had been coming up for the last two weeks in the most unaccountable ways and seasons — sometimes when he was having a jolly bout with his classmates.

A little snowy wing of cloud swept across the moon. Tom had reached a point now where the road was intersected by another on his right. On

the left a group of evergreens made a mass of black shadow that looked rather gruesome in the night. Tom knew that, despite the solemn stillness around him, a turn in the road, only a short distance off, would bring him into the vicinity of the outlying farmhouses in Belmont.

Then it came upon him, so suddenly, so unexpectedly, that it seemed to leap from the air, but it was dealt with such blind force that young Draycott staggered and fairly lost his balance.

Something had sprung upon him, powerful, resolute, hostile. It had leapt from the road on his right so swiftly and silently that Tom had been taken utterly unawares.

The blow had come from behind. The swift instinct of self-defence flashed to brain and heart. With a gasp and a growl of rage, Tom turned on his assailant. He had a swift sense that he was confronting a square-built figure, somewhat under his own height. Then he closed with it.

Tom Draycott was a strong, athletic fellow, and his college gymnastics kept him in fine physical condition. But he soon discovered, though he was dealing with no trained athlete, that his assailant had a muscular strength and a power of planting his fists which would tax all his energies to defend himself.

It was no play now. On the still night air, unstirred by a ripple of wind, broke no sound but the

swift blows and the struggling breaths. For a time neither side gained any decided advantage.

Was he fighting with this ruffian for his life? The thought, flashing across Tom Draycott, made his brain cool, his senses alert, in the midst of his rage and peril.

His last blow had told. He knew that by the breathing of his foe. But the latter's turn came soon. A heavy fist was planted in Tom's side. It seemed as though his ribs were smashed; he saw stars; then a faintness came over him; he fell to the ground. For a moment or two he was at the mercy of his enemy. The moon swam out of the cloud. The light shone full upon the two in the old pasture-road.

Then there was a cry. It pierced through young Draycott's momentary blankness. It was full of unutterable surprise, horror, remorse.

Tom leaped to his feet, still shaken and dizzied, every drop of blood in his body boiling with rage. His deadly assailant was now shrinking and cowering before him. Tom advanced on him with clenched fist.

"You villanous young rascal," he roared, "you'll find this attack will cost you dear before I get through with you."

"I didn't know it was *you*. I didn't know," pleaded the other in a tone of helpless despair. Tom could have knocked him down with a feather.

"But *I* knew!" retorted Tom, stinging and bruised with the blows, and in anything but a mood to be placated. "You meant to rob me. That was your game, and the State's Prison is the place for you."

There was no reply this time. Tom saw the figure shrink and cower again.

The two stood still and stared at each other. Each, too, must have been smarting from the other's blows; but no bones had been broken, no serious harm done. The whole struggle probably occupied less than three minutes.

Tom's first impulse was to order the fellow to march off with him; he resolved not to lose sight of him until he was in the hands of the police. Then that pleading, despairing cry broke out again. This time the words struck Tom through all his towering rage.

"I didn't know it was you."

"What difference does that make? You knew it was somebody on the highway, and meant to rob him. What a dastardly business that was, too, sneaking up behind a man on a lonely road and knocking him down!"

The same silence — the same cowering air.

Then the fact struck Tom that he had been completely in this fellow's power for an instant. He might, after that last blow, have pommelled him senseless, robbed him, and left him lying in the moonlight

on the solitary pasture-road. But for some mysterious reason he had fallen back like one smitten with fear or remorse. What did those words — so curiously reiterated — mean?

"Come!" exclaimed Tom, loud and wrathful. "If such a scoundrel as you has anything to say for himself — say it!"

"I've said all I can," in a dogged, hopeless tone. "I didn't see you; I didn't know it was you."

"You were not likely to know who I was, I imagine. But you meant to knock me down and rob me!"

"Yes; afore I see you."

"Then, you confounded rascal, you pretend to say you know me?"

"I know I see you once."

Tom told himself the fellow — a highway robber on his own confession — was probably lying; yet by this time his curiosity was a good deal aroused.

"Where do you pretend you ever saw me?"

"Don't you remember, sir? I'm the fellow you gave the money to, week afore last, near Tremont Street."

Tom stared at his whilom enemy a moment. Then he recalled the face. In the bright moonshine he could see the eyes which had been haunting him for the last week. The discovery caused so strong a revulsion in his feelings that he was provoked at himself.

"Pretty way you've taken to show your gratitude to a man for doing you a kindness!"

There was no reply; only Tom was more open to the misery and despair in the young fellow's look and manner.

"How long have you been up to this sort of game?" his tone as severe as he could make it.

"It was the first time I ever tried it."

And again Tom told himself he did not believe the fellow; but all the same he partly did.

"What did you do it for?"

"Because I was hungry, powerful hungry," he repeated.

This statement occasioned a still stronger revulsion of feeling on young Draycott's part. He, however, kept up a show of severity in tone and manner, and took refuge in general principles.

"It was better to beg than take to your game. There are plenty of people who would be willing to give a hungry man a dinner."

"But if he asked at the back door he'd stand a chance of bein' taken for a tramp, and put in the lockup."

This succinct statement of the facts left Tom without a reply.

After a little pause he recurred to another question.

"How long is it since you had a square meal?"

"I had a slice o' bread and a glass of milk yesterday, and a biscuit and some apples to-day."

"Is that all?" Tom's tone was much mollified.

"Yes."

Young Draycott thought of his own six luxurious meals during that time, and his sympathy got uppermost now.

"What is your name?" he asked in a moment.

"Dake Cramley."

It struck Tom that the first name might be the survival of some polysyllabic one.

"Well," he continued, "haven't you any family, any friends, who would help you over a rough place?"

"I ain't got no family livin', and no friends I'd like to go on when I was hard up."

"You look like a strong, robust fellow, then, who might get hold of some sort of work, if he tried for it."

"I have tried for it lots o' times. But jest now 'tain't so easy to git. There's more hands than's wanted. That's why they turned me off from the Lowell Railroad where I had a job for awhile."

And again Tom found no answer.

"Well, come along," he said shortly, after a few moments' deliberation.

The strangely assorted brace, who a few moments before had been at each other's throats, turned and walked together in silence over the road which shouldered itself up to the Heights. They passed the few scattered houses on the crest, and then descended the slope of hill, until they turned at right

angles into the solitary highway which leads over to Arlington.

Every little while Tom shot a questioning glance at his companion. It struck him that the stalwart fellow walked rather feebly, and that it was all he could do to keep up with his own stride. That, however, was easily accounted for if he had not eaten a solid meal for two days.

It would have been the easiest matter in the world to give the fellow into the hands of the first policeman they met. Tom believed he would not have made the slightest resistance — doubted, indeed, whether he would greatly care. He had probably expended his utmost strength in his short, desperate assault, and the shock with which he had recognized his antagonist had evidently upset him.

Tom began mentally to make excuses for his companion, and then was exasperated with himself to find that his anger had all evaporated.

He broke the silence at last in a tone which was not intended to betray much softening of mood.

“According to your own statement, then, you started off to-night intending to waylay the first man you could find, knock him down, and rob him. Those are the plain facts, as I understand them.”

“I know it looks so,” replied the boy, in a half-sullen, half-indifferent manner, his gait slacking a little, and his shoulders bent forward, as one’s might from sheer weakness.

Then of a sudden he stopped short, drew himself up, faced Tom, and spoke out earnestly.

“But the way it looks, sir, ain’t the truth for all that. I’d no notion, no more than you, of robbin’ any man when I left the city this mornin’. It was pleasant, and I wanted to be out in the sunshine and fresh air. I had a kind o’ feeling they’d make me forgit what a hungry dog I was. I walked on and on, and had as good a time as a feller could who hasn’t had his breakfast and nothin’ to eat the day before—at least not a meal for a robin. I couldn’t make up my mind to stop at some door, and say I was hungry, and take my chances of being hustled off to the lockup. But I was about used up when night came, between the walkin’ and a hollow and a knawin’ inside.

“I’d got round to Belmont without much mindin’ where I went, and I made up my mind to go into the woods there and bunk for the night, and next mornin’ run my chance, start for the first farmhouse, and ask for somethin’ to eat. Folks might think better of me in the daytime than seein’ me prowlin’ round at night.

“Then you came along jest as I turned into the road, lookin’ so strong and powerful swell, and whistlin’ to yourself with that high and mighty air, as though the world wasn’t good enough for you to tread on. It seemed as though you was a-doin’ it all jest to crow over me. It fired me

up mad to see you. I didn't stop to think. Afore I knew what I was about I was on you.

"I didn't want to hit any body bad; but I meant to knock you down, and scare you into givin' me some money, and gettin' a solid meal afore I slept. But you was so game I had to hit out harder than I meant. If I'd known 'twas you," falling back on the old plea, "I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head; no sir-ee, I wouldn't, not if I'd starved. But 'tain't reason you should put yourself in my place."

The last sentence, half to himself, was in a slightly lowered key.

In a little while they were among the houses of the bustling little town which lay sleeping among its hills in the white moonlight.

Young Draycott was meanwhile doing the very thing which Dake Cramley had pronounced impossible, — putting himself in the other's place.

"Poor fellow!" he was saying to himself, "I might have done no better if I had been in his cracked old shoes to-night, a homeless, penniless, starving tramp! It's horribly hard lines! Curious, this difference in human fates! It doesn't seem fair on the under dog!" A twinge in his right arm, a soreness under his ribs, did not overcome the pity which by this time had gained the mastery of all other emotions.

The question which now faced young Draycott was a perplexing one, doubly so, as its answer did not admit of delay.

“He had got this fellow on his hands; what was he to do with him?”

A vague notion of carrying him off to Red Knolls, giving him a supper, and a berth in the stable-loft, had soon to be dismissed. In his father's absence he could not assume the responsibility of exposing the small household to any risks by bringing this stranger into its proximity.

Several other plans presented themselves to be rapidly disposed of. The last one, however, became audible.

“Hold up a minute, you Dake Cramley, and hear what I have to say!

“I am going to prove to you just what a hopeless jackass I am; for in spite of the fact that you have sprung on me, knocked me down, and half-pommelled the life out of me, I am going to try if something can't be done for you! Confound it all! There must be something worth saving in you; for you did remember I had once done you a favor.

“When the Boston train comes along—it's almost due now—I want you to jump aboard. Here is a car-fare and some change.” Tom had emptied his pocket, and he pressed ticket and coin into the other's hand.

“The first thing you do, after you reach Boston, put for a restaurant, and get a square meal. Tomorrow night—no,” checking himself, “there's that class-business—the night after—I'll see you, and,

meanwhile, make it a point to try what can be done for you. You are willing to work — buckle down in good earnest, you say?"

"Yes." It was a husky articulation, as though speech did not come easily; but the eyes which looked at Tom Draycott were the eyes which had been haunting him, more or less, during the last fortnight.

"Well, I will search round to get you a chance," the voice much softened now. "Don't forget, night after to-morrow. Be on hand any time after seven o'clock. Wait until ten for me, if I don't appear sooner, on the Common — Park side — plenty of benches there. You know where it is?"

"Should think I did," said Dake Cramley.

"There come the cars! We'll have to hurry! Why, fellow, don't stagger so!" putting out his arm to steady the youth who appeared ready to drop with weakness.

"Get a bowl of hot soup the first thing after your fast. I'm going to see you on the train."

It was thundering into the station.

VI

A BREAKFAST DIALOGUE

"TOM DRAYCOTT, I do believe you are the worst bear on the planet this morning."

Dorothy laid down her fork as she made this remark, and looked with grave reproof at her brother.

They were at breakfast in the pleasant sun-flooded dining-room, where the furnishings and appointments, mostly in neutral tints, produced charming effects.

Some choice pictures, paintings and engravings, were on the walls, while the table, with its silver and delicate china, all combined to form an attractive environment for the two young people who were having their morning meal, under circumstances which it seemed left nothing to desire. Indeed, one might question whether a king's palace dining-room, with all its spacious splendor, might not miss that simple charm which invested like an atmosphere all the Red Knolls interior, and which was owing to the taste and the fine feeling for color of the absent mistress.

Dorothy sat in her mother's place before the coffee-urn. She wore a cloth dress of olive green, some silk of an amber shade and soft gauzy texture at her

white young throat. The sunlight made a shining bronze in the dark thick mesh of hair on her forehead. She formed a centre of girlish bloom and grace for that charming interior.

"It's safest to let bears alone," retorted Tom in a gruff tone; "if you don't, they're apt to growl and show their teeth dangerously."

"I am quite aware of it, after my long experience with that species of animal."

Dorothy's eyes sparkled defiantly, but there was a tell-tale smile about the curves of her mouth.

"A girl never knows when to let a fellow alone," Tom continued, helping himself to a fresh supply of omelette. "You have been chatting about that party ever since we sat down. It is such a bore."

"It was anything but a bore, I can assure you, to those who were present. We had a splendid time, and so might you, Tom Draycott, if you had only done the civil thing and gone with me. I thought Genevieve looked disappointed when I came in alone."

"You contrived to carry off Hidalgo with you. He could certainly protect you as well as I."

Dorothy raised her brown, straight brows.

"No doubt! At least, I should always prefer a dog's protection to a bear's."

Ordinarily Tom would have laughed at this retort. Despite his young masculine conceit, he was always

aware, and usually ready to admit, when his young sister's feminine wits got the better of his.

But this morning Tom Draycott was *not* in a good humor. His muscles were stiff, and his bruises gave him many sharp twinges, all of which he felt like visiting on the head of Dake Cramley. He wondered whether the fellow was not a thorough-going scoundrel after all, and whether he had not proved himself a sentimental crank last night.

"You are always ready to accuse me of incivility toward some of your friends," he continued. "As though I had nothing to do but train round after every chit of a girl you take a notion to gush over."

"Chit of a girl! Gush over!" echoed Dorothy in a raised key, bridling her pretty head. "I can bear any names you may choose to call me; but I do beg you will speak with respect of the dearest girl in the world, and my most intimate friend."

Tom had a young man's slight opinion of girl-friendships, but he knew this was a point on which his sister was sensitive. A quarrel would spoil the breakfast hour. Tom's sense, or his conscience, came to the rescue.

"Suppose we call a halt just here. We each have a grievance. Yours is all about a party, and mine is my dog."

"But you don't mean you really cared for Hidalgo, Tom?"

“I mean I should have been glad to have him with me last night. A man likes his dog’s company on a lonely tramp.”

At this point Tom was conscious of sundry dartings and shootings on his left side. He hoped “the other fellow had some of the same kind.”

“Will you give me another cup of coffee — a little more cream, please?”

As Dorothy handed back the cup, the small table at which they took breakfast saving the necessity of a maid, and affording greater freedom to the conversation, the light struck Tom’s face at a new angle.

“Tom,” exclaimed Dorothy in a startled tone, “you have a black mark above your right eye. Where did you get it?”

“What nonsense!” exclaimed Tom. “A girl is always fancying she sees things.”

“But it is no fancy this time. As though I hadn’t eyes! Something must have happened to you last night, or you would not have been so — so disagreeable this morning.”

Tom tried a laugh, but it was not all amusement, and Dorothy’s ears were as keen as her eyes.

She was silent a moment, watching her brother intently, and recalling what he had said about wanting Hidalgo last night. At last she asked very gravely, “Tom, have you been fighting with anybody?”

That clever little sister of his was certainly driving

him into a corner! Tom made an effort to bluff her off.

"'Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For 'tis their nature to,'"

he murmured.

"O Tom! you know that is not answering my question."

"Will you please to answer mine? By what sort of authority do you set yourself up an inquisitor into my actions?"

"I see how it is!" exclaimed Dorothy, not deigning to notice this query. "You've had a quarrel with some of those Sophomores! How mamma would feel!"

"That's it!" subjoined Tom. "He's a bad boy. Threaten him with his mamma again!"

But he was secretly delighted to perceive that his sister was on the false trail now.

Then Dorothy's anxious look, and the real manliness at bottom with Tom Draycott, made him say suddenly in a changed tone, —

"Have you no better opinion of me than questions of this sort imply? Must I tell you that your mother's son has done nothing he would be ashamed to have her know?"

Dorothy's brow cleared.

"But something — somebody," she continued in a moment, "has been hurting you, Tom. That black bruise never came of itself."

"Please don't say any more about it." The tone was half irritable, half entreating. "I suppose you would not object to my using my fists when it came to a matter of self-defence?"

Dorothy's eyes flashed fiercely.

"I have always heard those Harvard Sophomores — at least a good many of them — were no better than whooping savages. Now I believe it. If they dare to set on you, Tom, I hope you will pay them back in their own coin. Wretches!"

Tom was mentally revolving whether class-loyalty demanded of him an assertion of Sophomore guiltlessness in the present case, when the entrance of the maid with the morning mail created a happy diversion.

But Dorothy, just before she left for her Boston class that morning, turned back to the library and said to her brother, half seriously, half archly, —

"Tom, do you suppose you and I will ever evolve, as papa says, into such saints that we shall stop teasing each other?"

Tom raised his eyebrows, looked quizzically at his sister, who made a charming picture standing there in her light-colored cloth coat, and the toque of a dark shade, its loops of crimson ribbon, crossed with a silver arrow, surmounting her dark-bright mesh of hair.

"That millennial period will dawn," he said, "when a girl can be made to understand and make some allowance for a fellow's mood."

Dorothy was ready with her retort. Not all the softness which had supervened on reading her mother's letter could hold it back.

"And also when a fellow can be taught to have some idea and make some allowance for a girl's feelings!"

Tom Draycott, going to recitations that morning, conscious of a black eye and a general stiffness and soreness, was not in a particularly agreeable frame of mind.

"I feel like a bruised, battered old hulk," he was saying to himself. "Pretty mess I've got myself into! Better that bill had been at the bottom of the sea than going into that precious rascal's paw.

"Of course, he is laughing in his shabby old sleeve at the pretty game he played, and the way he kept out of the policeman's hands.

"It's plain to the universe that any creature more than one remove from a gibbering idiot wouldn't have been taken in as easily as I was last night.

"That isn't the worst of it, either. I have given my word to see the villain to-morrow night, and I'm honor bound to try and give him a pull out of the slums. Nice time I shall have of it, no doubt!

"Ugh! There goes my arm again. It makes a fellow want to swear."

VII

CAPITALIST AND SOPHOMORE

THE next morning Tom Draycott might have been seen entering the office of a large paper manufacturing house on Devonshire Street.

It was still early business hours. The head of the house — the controlling brain of the vast paper-mills in the western part of the State — had just seated himself at his desk. He was getting stout, and his well-trimmed beard and hair were turning iron-gray. He had a square, solid head, and the swift, shrewd glance of one who was used to taking rapid measures of men. You would have known in an instant that here was a practical, well-balanced, successful man, one who had looked the world squarely in the face, and made his account with it.

“Tom, my boy, I’m heartily glad to see you.”

The brightening of his face as he recognized young Draycott gave it a pleasant expression.

The two shook hands, the younger seated himself by the table.

“I’m lucky to strike you this morning, Mr. Meredith,” he said; “I rushed over early for that very purpose.”

"You are in the nick of time. Half an hour later, I must be off to a bank-directors' meeting."

A few queries and replies about Red Knolls, and the latest advices from the travellers, intervened; and with the first pause, Tom broke in hastily, —

"My special errand at this time is to recall to you, Mr. Meredith, some words you once said to me."

"Well, let's have them, Tom," pushing away the papers on his desk, leaning back in his office-chair, and confronting his young friend with an encouraging smile.

"If I can ever do you a favor, Tom, for your father's sake, make no bones of coming to me at once. I'll serve you to the best of my ability."

The head of the firm of Meredith, Max, & Co. had been a schoolmate of Donald Draycott. The men, unlike as they were in temperament, and in a large range of ideas and standards, had always kept up the old boy-liking for each other.

"Well, Tom, I'm ready to stand by my word to your father's boy.. What can I do for you?"

"Thank you — lots. But the favor doesn't happen to be for myself this time. It is for — a fellow I take an interest in." He found it a little awkward to introduce such a *protégé*.

"Oh, that is it? Some classmate in trouble, eh?"

"Oh, nothing of that sort!" Tom's disclaimer was half-amused at seeing how wide the other was

of the mark. "The fellow is about as low down as you can find them,—friendless, homeless, penniless, and all the related adjectives. I want to give him a lift, and do it in a hurry. I think there is stuff in him worth saving; but he will go to the dogs, sure as gravitation, if somebody doesn't step in at this crisis. I can give you no references as to character or ability. I could not honestly ask you to place him in any position of trust or importance. The truth is, I have happened to cross his path, and learn something which makes me want to put him in the way of getting his bread and shelter. I have been turning the matter over in my mind for the last twenty-four hours. I can find no solution to the problem; I have come to you to help me."

Richard Meredith was by nature and experience a shrewd reader of people. He was satisfied Tom knew something not altogether to his *protégé's* credit.

He mused a moment, fingering his watch-chain.

"A man, you say?"

"Oh, no, a mere boy; at least, I should hardly think he could be eighteen—a strong-built, muscular young fellow, but in a bad case; has had, I happen to know, a sharp tussle with starvation."

"That is rough. You are your father's son, I see, Tom." The elder man looked at the younger with approving eyes. "But you know we can't run our business on philanthropic lines. That may sound

hard to you. It does to me when it comes to special instances. I wish you could give me a little more decided record of this fellow."

"I wish I could," a little uneasy, as the memory of a recent moonlight scene rose sharply before him. "It wouldn't be fair for me, however, to ask you to assume any risks. I can only say what I would to my father if he were sitting in your chair: 'I am sorry for the boy. I believe there is some good in him. Won't you give him a chance?'"

The man was certain his young friend held something back. Tom perceived this. He had a swift impulse to make a clean breast of the whole affair with Dake Cramley; but a second thought—a feeling for the boy—kept him silent. Mr. Meredith waited a few moments and resumed, —

"I heard yesterday they wanted some help down at the warehouse in the packing-room, a strong, active, handy sort of fellow, needed for that sort of work."

"I think he would fill the bill so far," rejoined Tom.

A few more queries and replies ensued.

The result of all was that Mr. Meredith said to Tom, —

"Well, I will keep my word, Tom. Your *protégé* shall have a chance. Tell him to be here to-morrow morning at nine o'clock, sharp. I will trust my own judgment for the rest; and if it is fairly favorable,

he shall be set at work in short order. I can't promise more than that; and I am doing this, my boy, for your sake and your father's."

"A thousand thanks."

Some people entered the office. Tom sprang to his feet. A shooting pain under his ribs made him hope that Dake Cramley would give him the slip that night.

There was only time to get his friend's promise to telephone the result of next morning's interview.

VIII

A MEETING ON THE MALL

IT was a beautiful April evening when Tom Draycott turned from Beacon Street into the Common. The robins had already sung in the elm boughs overhead. The earth-scents, strong and succulent, were in the air. The dead, melancholy brown of the grass was changing to a live, vivid green. In the west some embers of sunset still lingered — flakes of dull red on a long stretch of molten gold.

Tom's questioning gaze flashed along the line of seats which flanked one side of the mall, and which were largely occupied at this hour by *habitués* of the locality. As he came over the Harvard Bridge that evening, he had again tried to feel that he should felicitate himself if Dake Cramley did not turn up, and so would be off his conscience forever.

But there was no doubt of the interest in that interrogative glance as it flashed from one to another of the sitters. Tom's young, healthy muscles were rapidly regaining their elasticity, and their milder twinges had softened his mood toward Dake Cramley.

A figure sprang up from one of the benches, and

came rapidly toward young Draycott. He recognized the robust build, the shabby dress, in an instant.

As it drew nearer, too, he saw the glad light mingled with something like shame or remorse in the eyes.

Young Draycott had forestalled a *rôle* of coolness and dignity as the proper thing for his share in the impending interview; but he forgot all about that now, and said in a frank, off-hand way, likely to relieve any strain of the situation, —

“Well, you’re up to time, I see!”

“Yes,” responded Dake, awkwardly conscious. “I’ve been sittin’ here an hour; I was bound not to miss you.”

“We must plunge right into business now, as I’m in something of a hurry. We’ll have a turn round the Common.”

The two young figures moved briskly off together in the soft April dusk. Tom was about half a head the taller—hardly more than a year the senior. Perhaps it was the shabby dress of the younger which accented the contrast between them; for while Tom Draycott was a gentleman, and showed unmistakably the habits of his life in look and bearing, Dake Cramley carried his shoulders erect, and was by no means a clown in person or gait.

The next few minutes Tom had the talk all to himself. He related the morning’s interview with the head of the great paper manufacturing firm, Meredith, Max, & Co.

"There's a chance," he continued, "you may get a berth in their big warehouse down town. You are to be at the office by nine o'clock, prompt, and see what can be done about it. Of course, I can't promise anything; but you will be in luck if you get a foothold in that concern." Tom added the name of the street, and the office-number.

Dake drank in this talk, silent, intent. When his turn came to speak, he said gravely, —

"I can go, — of course I'll do that; but when your gentleman comes to see me, there'll be mighty small chance of my gettin' a job."

"What makes you think that?"

Tom stopped short, and confronted his companion.

"'Cause a feller without any trainin' can't step right into a new place, any more than he can speak a new language when he hears it for the first time."

Tom mentally admitted the force, on general principles, of this comparison; but he answered, —

"Oh, well, in this case, lack of training won't stand in your way. What they want is a smart, sturdy fellow, who can handle things lively, and make himself useful in the packing-room."

Dake drew a long breath, his face brightened:

"I reckon I can handle as big a weight, and go into the work as lively, as the next feller," he said.

"Well, go and try your luck to-morrow morning."

And this time Dake rejoined with more spirit, —

"Yes; I shall be there."

"And now," continued. Tom, with a gravity becoming a judge charging the jury, "it all lies with yourself. If you get a chance in that warehouse, and go at the work with a will, and do the square thing, you can make life another affair for yourself. Is there stuff in you to do this, Dake Cramley?"

Tom stopped short again, looked the boy in the eyes, a real anxiety, touched with doubt, in his own.

Dake squared his jaw grimly.

"That remains for a fellow to prove," he said. And it struck Tom there was more hope in such a reply than in promises and adjectives galore.

"One thing more," he continued. "Nobody knows a syllable about — things which have passed between us. You will enter on your new field with as clean a record as anybody there."

A glance shot from Dake's eyes into young Draycott's.

"You're mighty good! I—I wouldn't have believed there was anybody could be like that."

The words seemed to get a little tangled in the throat; but the glance had said more than they possibly could.

"There comes my car! I must get aboard for Cambridge," exclaimed Tom, looking up Tremont Street, into which they had turned.

The two shook hands and parted.

After Tom was seated in his car he wondered

whether Dake had money enough to get him a supper that night.

"The silver I gave him ought to have carried him over two days," he mused. "Not at Young's or Parker's, of course, but at some of the lunch-counters he must be familiar with. Perhaps he needs a lesson in economy. If that is the case, it won't hurt him to go to bed without his supper."

But though Tom thought it rather manly to affect this indifference, his heart was all the time pleading for his late comrade. He would have felt easier could he have been assured Dake Cramley would have a square meal before he set out for the warehouse next morning.

A message came from Meredith before Tom started that morning for Cambridge.

"Fellow appeared on time. Evidently hard up. Put him through a brief catechism. Looks as though he might be capable. Not absolute about the morale. Made up my mind to give him a chance. Sent him down to the warehouse to prove his mettle."

Tom replaced the tube, saying to himself:—

"Meredith's staccato goes to the point. He's done the handsome thing. Bless his kind old heart. Now, Dake Cramley, you must run the course, and good luck to you!"

IX

WHEN SHE WAS LITTLE NABBY WARE

DOROTHY DRAYCOTT had all a girl's interest and curiosity about her brother's college life. It was a point with her to have a bit of crimson often in evidence on ribbon or scarf, at waist or throat. Tom's stories of his classmates, of the varied clubs, the societies, the football and rowing teams, and all the light and shade of Sophomore-life, opened a new world to her. She drank in with radiant eyes and breathless peals of laughter Tom's reports of the frolics, contretemps, and adventures, which form so large a part of undergraduate existence.

This was a theme on which so thorough-going and loyal a Harvardian as Tom Draycott was sure to expand; and it was more agreeable than he would have admitted, to have such an eager, interested auditor whenever he sought her room with a batch of his college stories.

Dorothy knew the names of most of his classmates; and with his rapid, salient adjectives Tom outlined the character of the young men with whom his life was at this time in touch. No doubt these bold, swift strokes had something of the incompleteness

and injustice of epigram; but Tom's instinct often went straight as an arrow to the mark.

Dorothy certainly never thought of questioning his judgment in these matters, and accepted his verdict as final, when he spoke of one classmate as a prig, another as a cad, a rattler, or a crank; but these adjectives seemed neutral-tinted in comparison with "sneak and coward," or "a nature coarse-grained and poltroonish under a thin varnish of good manners."

Those, however, who went to the wall under this rapid, remorseless criticism were happily a very small minority. For the majority of his classmates Tom had only words of praise. The Sophomores of that year, he assured his sister, were, as a whole, the jolliest, best-hearted, noblest lot of fellows on the planet. He rang the changes now, with glowing adjectives, for those pink-flushed little ears which were eagerly drinking in every word. One fellow had "lots of sand," another was "the soul of honor," a third was "a glorious comrade for a lark," a fourth was "the grandest old Soph that ever drew breath — stuff that would march right up into the cannon's mouth without flinching a hair."

A third presence, always eagerly welcomed, often joined the young people at evening. Mrs. Dayles had an unfailing sympathy with youthful ideas and feelings, and she carried a cheery, bracing atmosphere with her wherever she went. Her orthoepy

and grammar were sometimes old-fashioned; but these were so much a part of herself, and of the wise, tender, quaint talk, that the most fastidious listener could have wanted nothing changed. The young Draycotts still called her Nanty Dayles. The homely name was to them full of dear, childish associations. It had originated with Dorothy, when, just over her fifth birthday, she went, with big eyes in a face still pale from her long struggle with whooping-cough, to the bracing air of the Belmont farmstead.

There was a subtle appropriateness in Dorothy's half playful, half affectionate title. It became naturalized, even with the elders.

One evening Mrs. Dayles entered the library. The quiet mother-face under its smooth gray hair, the small upright figure in its gown of black silk — plain almost as a nun's — made a quaint picture, suggestive of old-fashioned home life and virtues.

Tom had just been relating some story to his sister, full of rollicking Sophomore fun and adventures, and rib-splitting contretemps.

"O Nanty Dayles!" the girl exclaimed on catching a glimpse of the figure at the threshold, "you must get Tom to tell this story over again. It is the funniest thing. I have almost died for laughing — Hark!" in a changed tone. "What is that noise?"

"It's thunder," responded Tom after a moment's

attention. “Hurra! That shows old Spring is coming up this way at last.”

“Old!” echoed Dorothy. “She is the youngest thing in the world, and always will be.”

“But for all that she is æons older than Methusaleh,” retorted Tom.

At that moment a swift shower of April rain dashed at the window. Forked lightning flashed in the sky. The thunder rattled overhead, and winds broke like wild things from their lair, and filled the air with fierce cries.

Then Dorothy cried out, “Tom, your story must wait. When lightnings glare and winds howl like that, one wants something on a different key.”

“I cave!” he answered. “Nanty Dayles, one of your stories is worth lots of my nonsense. Let’s have it!”

“What sort of a story do you want, children?”

“Something about yourself; at least, one where you are the child actor in the drama,” answered Dorothy.

“By all means,” added Tom. “But I notice that is the sort you usually fight shy of.”

Mrs. Dayles seated herself in the great arm-chair Tom had brought to her, and laughed her quiet, amused laugh. Then she said, half to herself:—

“That was an April day, too, with a thunder-shower.”

“Oh, it must be something delightfully apropos!” cried Dorothy, supplying all ellipses.

"Go right ahead, Nanty," said Tom, stretching his long limbs on the lounge. "Is it tragedy or comedy?"

"You must decide for yourself, my dear boy."

This was the story which Mrs. Dayles told that night, while her audience of two no longer heard the rattling of thunder, or the menacing cries of winds outside.

"I was just eleven years old when it happened. Most people said I was small for my age. My father and mother had gone to New York for a fortnight's visit, and left me with my aunt, Jerushy Thacher, who lived in a village twenty miles away from my home. She was my father's only sister, a widow, with one son. Dan was a shy, big, clumsy, good-hearted fellow, about five years older than I.

"It was my first visit from home. Aunt Jerushy and Dan were doing their best to spoil me, praisin' me to my face, and repeatin' my speeches in a way that was likely to turn a little 'leven-year-old head.

"One afternoon my aunt went off with Dan to the nearest town to do some shoppin'. It had been one of the loveliest mornin's, and I'd been out hearin' the robins sing, and watchin' the apple-blossoms beginnin' to sprinkle the scraggy old boughs with their white and pink snow.

"Before they started my aunt had told me they should be gone until night, and talked of sending for a neighbor's girl to keep me company. But I begged

to be left alone. A story-book from New York had come to me the night before. That would be company enough. Story-books, you know, weren't as common in my days as they are in yours.

“I stood and watched the two drive down the road in the sunshine, and afterwards I lay down on the lounge and was soon buried in my book. I must have read a good while. When I stopped at last it had grown dark, and winds were lashin' the rose-bushes outside, and by the time I got up the rain was dashin' at the windows. All of a sudden there was a blaze of lightnin' round the room, and the thunder cracked overhead.

“I was old enough to know it was only an April shower which had swept down suddenly; but I had a lonesome time all by myself, and I tried to shut my eyes when the lightnin' glared, and my ears when the thunder crashed.

“All of a sudden I heard a cry through the tempest. My heart sprang into my throat. I knew it was a voice of distress just outside the door. I shivered and sat still. Then I heard it a second time. I could bear it no longer. I sprang up, rushed to the front door, and set it wide open.

“A boy — a small, scared, shrinkin' creature — stood there, drenched with rain, sobbin' with fright. I knew him with a glance. He was little Joe Morris, a pale, yellow-haired child who lived a short distance up the road. His aunt and uncle, well-meanin' folks,

as the world goes, had taken Joe to their home ; but they had a brood of their own, and the neighbors said the little orphan had a hard time of it.

“He was a pretty child, hardly six years old ; but there was a kind of pitiful look in his dark, hazel eyes which told its own story. They grudged Joe his place under the home-roof ; he was not welcome at its board.

“My aunt Jerushy, one of the kindest souls alive, had done what she could to brighten his hard lot. The little feet soon found their way to her doorstep. Joe was always sure of a kind word, and the big slice of pie or cake which lifts a child into a seventh heaven for the time.

“‘O Joe!’ I cried, pullin’ him out of the rain, ‘how did you get here in this awful storm?’

“‘I was all alone,’ he sobbed. ‘They’ve gone away and left me. I was scared when it grew so dark, and the big lightnin’ shone and the thunder roared, and I ran off to Mis’ Thacher’s.’

“I can see him now, standin’ there and sayin’ this, and lookin’ so forlorn and helpless in his thin clothes, which his small blue limbs had outgrown!

“I had heard his story from my aunt, who had been his mother’s dearest friend in their girlhood.

“‘To think of Anna Hart’s boy comin’ to that!’ aunt Jerushy would say, with the tears in her eyes: ‘She had such a sweet face, and was such a bright, merry girl. It did one good to see her. She threw

herself away on Dick Morris. He had a tongue that was likely to win any woman. I went to the weddin'; but for all the bride looked so fair and happy, and her lover so strong and manly, I had my own misgivin's.

“‘They went away, and in less than two years rumors of trouble came back to Anna's old home. After a long time she came too, with Joe. No word of complaint ever passed her lips, but those who looked in her face knew that a broken heart lay under it. She died in a little while. Joe had no kin left but his mother's only brother. He wasn't like Anna, and had a family of his own. When it came to the pinch, they took the boy in, but it went ag'inst the grain.’

“All this I had learnt from my aunt's talk. I had learnt somethin' else too.

“One day a handsome carriage, with a smart pair of sorrel horses, went by while my aunt was at the window.

“‘There goes Wallace Keith,’ she said. ‘How spick and span we are now! Fifteen years ago, when he went out West, he had barely money to pay his fare. And he's come back a rich man, and can hold his head high amongst those who once looked down on him. He was Anna Hart's cousin, and would have liked to be somethin' more.’

“‘Did you know him?’ Dan asked.

“‘A little, when he used to come to see Anna. He

married after he went West; but his wife died in a few years, and for all his big fortune, he hasn't chick or child in the world. I should like to put a flea in that man's ear.'

" 'Why, mother, what do you mean?' Dan exclaimed.

" 'I mean, Dan, if I knew him better I should like to tell him about little Joe. If that rich man would only adopt him, now! But such things don't happen, only in the story books!'

" I brought Joe into the house, took off his wet jacket, pinned a shawl about him, for the little frame was shiverin', and I comforted him with apples and cakes.

" 'It's so nice here!' he said, lookin' around the room wistfully. 'I wish I could live here always.'

" My heart ached for him as he said that. Then my aunt's talk flashed into my mind. I remembered I had seen the handsome carriage and the sorrel horses go by just after aunt Jerushy and Dan went away.

" Then somethin' spoke out loud and sudden, though I couldn't tell where it came from.

" But I knew all the same what it meant.

" 'Why don't *you* do it, Nabby Ware?'

'Oh, I never could!' I said to myself, shrinkin' all over. 'I shouldn't dare. He's such a big, strong man, and I'm only a 'leven-year-old girl!'

" 'But there's little Joe!' the voice said. It kept

sayin’ that, and I kept sayin’ to myself, ‘I never could, — I never could, if it was to save my life!’

“But suddenly I glanced up the road, and saw the sorrel span comin’ at a smart pace, the big horses archin’ their necks and tossin’ their manes. I don’t know to this day how I did it. It was all over in a flash. I seized Joe, bundled him up in my aunt’s red shawl, and ran with him down to the gate. The horses were passin’ at the moment, but I shouted with all my might, —

“‘Oh, won’t you please to stop here, sir?’

“The man, all alone on the front seat, pulled the reins up. He stared at me as though I must be an elf sprung right out of the ground.

“‘Well, what is it you want?’ he asked rather sharply. He was a large, good-lookin’ man, with a thick, brown-grayish beard, and eyes that looked as though they could read anybody through and through.

“By this time I was out in the road. I pulled Joe forward; I said the words which came first, and all the time, it seemed somebody else who was speaking.

“‘It’s little Joe Morris. His father and mother’s dead, and they don’t treat him kind at his uncle’s, where he lives. I thought—I thought’ — I couldn’t get out another word.

“The man kept staring on, first at me, then at Joe.

“‘Well, let us know what you did think,’ he said, in a little more encouragin’ tone.

“‘Oh, sir, they say you’re such a rich man, and can do anything you want! I thought may be if you could see Joe and know about him, you’d be sorry, and take him to be your boy, and live with you.’

“‘Well, upon my word, you are a cool young woman!’ he said, in another tone this time, and he laughed a curious little laugh.

“‘No!’ I said; ‘I’m not cool at all, and I’m scairet a’most out of my senses; but it was Joe’s only chance, you see!’

“‘Well, I’m not goin’ to eat you up. This is bigger fun than chasin’ bear,’ he said to himself. ‘Who may you be, little girl?’

“‘I’m Nabby Ware, ’leven years old, and I live at Cherry Forks, and my father has gone to New York with my mother, and I’m visitin’ my aunt, Jerushy Thacher.’

“‘Is Joe, here, any relation of yours?’

“‘Oh, no, sir; but he lives down the road, and I know all about him.’

“‘Anybody tell you to speak to me like this?’

“‘Nobody did.’ After that I went on to tell him how my aunt had gone away with Dan, and left me alone, and how Joe came a-cryin’ in the rain.’

“‘This beats anything hollow in the way of simple, downright pluck I ever heard of!’ he said to himself, and then he laughed loud again. ‘You’ve got an honest little face too. But how did you come to know any thing about me?’

"I heard my aunt Jerushy talk about you. She said you knew Joe's mother—that she was your cousin."

"She did, eh?" A change came into his face and voice then. "What was her name?"

"It was Anna Hart."

"Great heavens! Anna Hart's boy!" He leaned over now, and stared a long while at Joe, who was standin' still all the time, as a little statue, his yellow curls shinin' above the red shawl.

"Yes; there is no doubt, you are your mother's boy, with those eyes," he muttered at last.

"I was so shaken and excited that I spoke out whatever thoughts came uppermost.

"Aunt Jerushy said you would have liked to be somethin' more than Anna Hart's cousin; but I don't know what she meant. Perhaps *you* do."

"Yes, *I* do!" He gazed at me with a queer, amused look in his eyes, and he asked, in a minute, "Little girl, what first started you to do this thing, anyhow?"

"It all came to me in a flash when Joe and I were together in the house. I said ever so many times I couldn't do it; but when I saw your horses comin' up the road, somethin' told me to try, and I jest took Joe and started. I thought if you could see him, and I could tell you, you'd be sorry for him, and God could do the rest if he was a mind to. Oh, yes! I did think of one thing more."

“‘What was that?’

“‘That when you come to see your cousin again, you might like to say to her, “I was kind to Joe.”’

“He didn’t say anything for a minute then.

“Afterward he took us both into the carriage, and we had a long drive off on the quiet, country roads. I was bareheaded, and Joe was bundled up in his shawl, but we didn’t mind. The sun had come out again, and all the young green was ashinin’ and twinklin’ in the rain.

“Soon after we started, the thing I had just done came up before me. It seemed like something awful — unheard of — that it would cling to me all my life! I broke out into a loud, helpless sobbing. I couldn’t have held it back to save my life. I never had cried so long and so hard before.

“The big, brown-bearded man was very kind. He drew his arm around me, and told me there was nothin’ to cry about. I had been the bravest little girl he ever heard of.

“When I grew calm at last, he asked a great many questions, all about Joe and myself. I can’t remember them now.

“But I do remember how the man, Wallace Keith, at last turned to Joe, who was on the back seat, and said to him, —

“‘Well, Joe, I fancy I can make things a little pleasanter for you than they are at present. What do you say? Are you ready to go off with me and try it?’

"Joe had been shy and afraid of the big stranger; but when he spoke in that tone, and smiled in a way that lit up his square, brown face, Joe, after a moment's pause, clambered over to him on the front seat.

" 'I should like to go with you,' he piped up; and he put his thin little hand in the man's big one, and laid the round yellow head on the big shoulder. Joe was a pretty child. I can see it all now."

The tears were in Mrs. Dayle's eyes.

"Oh, don't stop yet!" broke in Dorothy. "There must be more to tell."

"Not very much, my dear.

"The man said he must leave town the next day. He made me promise not to mention a syllable to anybody of what had occurred until my father returned.

" 'I can trust you, Nabby,' he said; and then he bent down and kissed me.

"He brought me home, and he and Joe drove away together. I never saw either again."

"But you heard something?" said Dorothy insistently.

"Yes; there was a long interview between Wallace Keith and Joe's uncle that night. What passed between them was never known; but it was believed there had been high words and angry reproaches for the scant kindness the dead sister's child had met with at his uncle's hands.

"The two men were not likely to love each other. People said Anna Hart would have married her cousin, had it not been for her brother's interference.

"But the uncle consented to relinquish all claim to Joe. The next day he went away with his new friend.

"After a while there came letters from California to my father and me. Joe had gone there early in the fifties with Wallace Keith, who had adopted him.

"The two were devoted to each other. It seemed as though the man could not praise and thank me enough for what I had done that day.

"Joe grew up to manhood, and when the war broke out he led a regiment to the battlefield. He died there at the head of his men.

"His adopted father, they said, was never quite the same man after the news came. He was often heard to say he wanted to see once more the little girl who brought him Joe. At last he set out for the East. On the way he stopped to visit a minin'-camp. He caught a fever there, and never reached his journey's end. He was an old man by that time."

"Was he a rich one?" asked Tom.

"Oh, yes. But he left no will. The money all went to distant relatives."

"You should have had a big slice of it."

"It wasn't for money I seized Joe that afternoon, and hurried down to the gate with him, and shouted to the man to stop. I never felt any hankerin' for

Wallace Keith's riches. I've always felt I had more than I deserved of this world's goods; and it was enough for me to know that he and Joe had all those happy years together.”

“It beats anything in the way of juvenile pluck I ever heard of!” exclaimed Tom. “A little slip of a girl! It was grand! It was immense — the way you faced that old fellow with Joe.”

“It never seemed quite as though *I* did it, Tom. Something carried me out of myself.”

“I shall always be glad to know such a splendid deed took place once in the world!” subjoined Dorothy. “It makes me feel so small. I have never done anything like that, though I am an old thing of seventeen!”

She drew a long, remorseful sigh.

Mrs. Dayles looked at her with a half tender, half amused expression.

“The chances for helpin' people are always comin' up, my dear. One never gets too old for them.”

She did not tell the girl, as most women would, that she was very young. She knew Dorothy felt older at that moment, under her scant handful of birthdays, than she probably would when they had grown to seventy. Then she would know what a brief affair life was.

“Look here!” called Tom, who had taken himself to the window. “You can't afford to lose such a piece of sky-scenery as this.”

The others crossed to the window, and saw in the upper sky two long reaches of shining gray cloud, edged with black. Between these was a wide gulf of sapphire sky in which shone the solemn, immutable stars.

X

GENTLEMAN OR SNOB — WHICH ?

DURING these days, what with lectures, clubs, foot-ball games, the opening of the rowing season, private theatricals, and all sorts of social and college matters which devour the time and absorb the soul of the Harvard Sophomore, Tom did not find a half-hour to spare for Dake Cramley. He thought of him often — had the best intentions of running over to the warehouse of Meredith, Max, & Co., to see how he liked the place, and was getting on with the new work. It must be an enormous change for him, Tom reflected. He had, however, only a faint idea of all which the novel environment, the rigid hours, the long days of toil, must mean to Dake Cramley, with the roving, vagrant habits which had become second nature, and with the young hot blood of youth in his veins certain to rebel, and clamor for the old freedom and vagabondage.

One morning Tom Draycott, rushing to board a Harvard electric on Tremont Street, ran against Mr. Meredith. After the first greeting Tom began eagerly, —

"I suppose you received my note of thanks for

giving young Cramley a berth in your warehouse. How is he getting on? I hope he faces the music pluckily. There is a case where I feel a huge responsibility."

"I got your note, Tom. Very fair report from the warehouse. Fellow, thus far, goes into the work like one who doesn't mean to shirk."

Tom's face showed his gratification. "Glad to hear so good an account. He must congratulate himself on such good luck."

"I'm not so sure of that, Tom," with the shrewd, quiet smile which spoke volumes for his large experience with all sorts and conditions of men.

"I should suppose there could be but one question in his case," added Tom, with the positiveness of youth and inexperience.

"It would seem so — on the surface. But I have found the fellows who come up from the slums don't take kindly to the regular hours and steady work. It's natural they should kick at first. Many of them do always and clear out at last, going back to the old free, vagabond life, even if it does mean rags, hardship, and hunger."

"I suppose there is something in all that."

Tom's remark was partly in deference to the other's opinion; still there were certain corpuscles in his own fiery young blood which made him conscious at that moment of a flash of fellow-feeling with the vagabond.

Then the two lifted their hats and went their different ways.

Three days after this conversation Tom Draycott and Dake Cramley had a meeting which neither of them will ever forget.

Tom was on Beacon Street early in the afternoon with one of his classmates. The two tall, athletic young Sophomores, in their well-fitting summer suits, came rapidly on with the swinging stride and the air of those who feel that the world belongs to them. They were full of loud talk and frequent bursts of laughter; they were discussing the new crews and the base-ball teams, and relating with infinite gusto some of the club jests, and certain tricks which their class had recently played on the Freshmen.

Tom's gaze suddenly caught a figure approaching which had a familiar look. The next instant he recognized Dake Cramley — the stalwart build, the dark head, the coat so shabby as to just escape raggedness. Tom saw that Dake had recognized him by the little involuntary start and slight slackening of his gait. All the differences in their lot, all the gulf between their happy, careless, prosperous youth, their culture, refinement, leisure, and this other youth of poverty, hardship, ignorance, toil, seemed cruelly accented.

Tom was conscious of a wish that Dake Cramley had not turned up at this precise juncture. Then all that was generous and manly in his nature rose to rebuke the cowardly wish.

"You will be the meanest sneak, the most contemptible snob, who walks this planet, if you don't stand to your guns now, Thomas Draycott!"

He said it with a little more fervor, perhaps, because young Fallowes was inclined to be fastidious in his tastes and associations. A few more years, a little rougher handling of the world, would correct all that. But Tom was himself too young to know this.

Meantime, the crucial moment had come. Dake had drawn near.

Tom sprang forward. "Hullo, Dake!" his voice rang out heartily. "Glad to see you once more. How does the work go?"

Young Fallowes had halted too. His quiet, well-bred glance went over the whole exterior—the big figure, the tanned face, the threadbare clothes.

Dake's face brightened as he shook hands with young Draycott. But he was shy in the presence of that "swell" classmate. Moreover, he was decidedly conscious of the difference between their coats and his own.

"Work goes on all right," he managed to get out.

"Of course, I knew it must be a good deal of a grind at first," Tom said sympathetically. Then a sudden, defiant impulse, which quite dominated any sense of humor in the situation, came over him. He turned to young Fallowes, and said with a little unnecessary empressment, —

“Allow me to present my friend, Mr. Dake Cramley, to you, Mr. Philip Fallowes.”

The young man whom his classmates pronounced “a bit dudish, though a thoroughly good fellow,” was equal to the situation; he lifted his hat in his most pronounced fashion; he made his most elegant bow.

“Happy to meet you, Mr. Dake Cramley,” he said.

Dake responded with a quick nod and a rather curt, —

“How do you do, Mr. Fallowes.”

Then he turned and looked at Tom, with something in his eyes which no word or deed had ever kindled in them before.

But Fallowes did not catch the glance.

Tom had a few more words to add — half apologetic — about the breathless pace at which he had been kept going during these last days, and of his intention to see Dake before the week was out.

There was a brief silence after the two resumed their walk. Then Fallowes said, half serious, half jesting, —

“Where did you get hold of such a pal, Draycott? He strikes me as a good deal of a bummer!”

Tom stopped short. There was a steely glitter in his eyes.

“See here, Fallowes,” he said, “I called that fellow my friend, and, by Jove, I’ll stand by it too! If you are going to make game of him, we’ll have a trial of fists when we get over the bridge.”

Fallowes broke into a laugh. "So you want to prove your principles by giving me a high-and-mighty drubbing, do you? I don't ache for it. Besides I'm not such a fool as to go in on such infinitely small provocation—not much! Can't you take a joke, Draycott?"

Tom laughed too, but with the feeling that Fallowes had rather got the better of him.

When the car was crossing the bridge, however, Fallowes turned to his classmate and said earnestly, —

"You are a good fellow, Draycott. I like the kind that nails his colors to the mast and stands by them. There's my hand on it."

XI

CONCERNING DAKE CRAMLEY.

THE day but one following the brief encounter on Beacon Street, Tom Draycott presented himself at the office of Meredith, Max, & Co.

Tom had chosen the early morning again for his visit. The senior partner, recently arrived, nodded to his young friend, disposed of two or three callers as soon as possible, saying, as he shook hands with young Draycott, —

"What is in the wind this time, Tom? Anything about your *protégé*?"

"Yes; with a vengeance!" going straight to the point, which was sure to count with a man of Meredith's business methods. "My special errand here this morning is to inform you that I am bound to see Dake Cramley indued in a decent suit of clothes. Of course, I could settle the matter in short order by sending him some of my own; but that is not the best way to keep up his self-respect. You agree with me there?"

"Entirely, my sapient young friend!" with an amused twinkle in his eyes, which, a moment later, was reflected in Tom's.

"The fact is," he continued gravely a moment later, "I saw him down town day before yesterday, and I never want to see him again in that shabby old tog-gery. The poor fellow was evidently ashamed of it. I tried to put myself in his place. It wasn't pleasant."

"Probably not. But nothing serves so well as bringing a case of this sort home to ourselves. What is the outcome with you?"

"That Cramley is going to have a bran new suit, all-fired quick, and that I shall pay for it, only I want you to help me out with details."

"How?"

"Give him a little higher wages. Of course my young man isn't to suspect my hand in the matter, but I will stand the racket."

The elder man gave an amused whistle.

"That is a novel way for the house of Meredith, Max, & Co. to conduct business."

Tom flushed a little. "No doubt; but it seemed the only feasible plan I could hit on."

"It strikes me I can suggest a better one. The reports from the warehouse are so favorable as to the vim with which the fellow puts himself into the work, that I had about decided to raise his wages — a trifle. "I can do this by sending him to a wholesale house, with a note which will secure him a suit in a trice, at a discount. I will settle the bill, and retain the extra wages until all is paid up. We have tried that plan more than once with our workmen. It has served

well, and it has the advantage of being all above-board. Your young man will pay for his clothes instead of believing he is doing so."

"I see. Your project is the best. Thank you heartily, Mr. Meredith."

During this talk several people had come in, waiting their chance for an audience. Tom became conscious of their vicinity for the first time.

As he rose to leave, the elder added, "I will see the young man to-day about the matter."

"I shall always regard this as a personal favor," the younger replied.

As Richard Meredith turned toward the small crowd awaiting him, he said to himself, —

"Donald Draycott is a lucky fellow to have a boy like that!"

On the evening of that day the young Draycotts sat together on the deep circular porch at the west side of the house. It was the first time they had done this since the autumn; but last year seemed now a long way off to the young people, as they looked at it across the white winter months.

The crocuses and hyacinths were abloom on the terraces. The trees were beginning to open out their vast screens—the delicate reds of budding maples, the faint, misty emerald of elms and birches.

The great springtide was rapidly advancing northward. In a little while the vast rejoicing flood of bursting leaves and blossoms would overflow all the

silence and bareness. One might almost hear a prescient whisper in the air of that April night. The summer was coming!

"O Tom, what a delicious night it is!" exclaimed Dorothy, with little elastic springs of the slender, girlish body, as she sat in the piazza-rocker. "How beautiful and solemn the stars look! There go the frogs again! One wants to live in such a world forever."

Tom was stroking Hidalgo's head as the superb creature waited at his side. He thought of Dake Cramley at that moment.

"One might like to live forever, if one belonged to the fortunate minority," he replied. "But even then one must grow old sometime; and with youth and health and friends gone, it might get awfully humdrum at last."

"Perhaps," said Dorothy. To her youth's radiant horizons, to her bounding pulses, growing old seemed just then a very remote thing. "But whom do you mean by 'fortunate people,' Tom?"

"Well, such people as you and I, Dollikins, with all the prizes fallen to our share — home and love and ease, and the money to make things run smoothly. Out in the rough of things, the toilers and moilers must find the world a very different sort of place, I fancy."

Dorothy thought of her little kindergartners in Boston. She had a class at which she, with some

other young girls, took her turn twice a week. She tried to do her best with the small untrained creatures; but she had no idea how much, or in what ways, they were doing for her.

"Yes, I suppose we are what you call us, Tom," she assented. "I suppose, too, we don't realize our own good fortune. We get used to it, as we do to the air or the sunshine."

Then, in a kind of subconscious way, she felt it was not just like her careless, teasing brother to talk in this fashion. She had no suspicion that he too was having some lessons in these days—not set down in the Harvard curriculum.

The April was in Dorothy's blood, in her thoughts, to-night. She was not in a mood to dwell long on any serious subject.

"Tom," she broke out suddenly, after a little silence. "Who was that young fellow with you this afternoon when you bowed to me, as I was going down North Avenue in the car?"

"That was Phil Fallows."

"He struck me as — very nice looking."

"The Sophs think he is slightly dudish. But there's manly stuff at bottom. When it comes to looks — of course a girl thinks of that first — he can hold his own with any fellow in the class. We had a long tramp in the woods to-day. Capital fellow for a lark! He can pull a good oar, too, and make a sandy fight at foot-ball. But he doesn't flunk at recitations."

"I was going over with your classmates the other day, one by one, as you had described them to me."

"Big lot. Hope you had a good time of it!"

"I'm not sure about that. But it struck me I should like Phil Fallowes, as you call him, better than any of your Sophs."

Tom hummed some snatch of a college song meditatively.

"I don't believe you have missed the mark far this time."

XII

A COAT AND TROUSERS REVOLUTION

TWO or three evenings later, Tom Draycott turned at twilight from Beacon Street into the Common, shooting a swift glance down the line of figures which occupied the benches on one side of the mall.

Tom had rushed into the warehouse the day before, but Cramley happened to be out at the time. He found on his return that his friend had left a line with one of the men, appointing an interview for the following evening.

Tom noticed a figure spring from one of the benches and approach him. He did not recognize the stranger until he was close at hand.

Dake Cramley was indued in a simple, perfectly-fitting, brand-new summer suit of darkish gray, surmounted by a fresh cap. His necktie, linen, and boots were new also, Dake having managed to secure these by the exercise of rigidest economy for the last month. But the transformation was immense. Tom could hardly believe his eyes. Dake was fully alive to the change. It struck Tom that the new clothes had imparted an air of self-respect, as though their wearer had a feeling that he belonged now to

the respectable, well-dressed classes, and had shed something more than his old garments when he cast them aside.

"Why, man alive, I didn't know you!" exclaimed Tom, surveying his friend from head to foot. "How bully we look in our new toggery!"

Dake laughed in a hearty, boyish way which Tom had never heard him do before; but he was a good deal embarrassed. Words always came slowly with the youth until he once got fairly started, and forgot himself.

"Let's have a walk," exclaimed Tom, who always took the initiative, "and have all the ins and outs of this coat and trousers revolution."

The pair started off together, and with the swing and stride of young, healthy muscles held their way along Beacon Street.

A few tactful questions drew out all the details. Dake's tongue once loosened, there was no lack of words. Tom learned that Meredith, when he appeared at the warehouse a few days before, had sent for "that new boy," and when he presented himself had said some encouraging words and proposed to make a slight advance in his salary, on a plan which he sometimes adopted with his employees.

"It was a maxim with him," the head and managing brains of the great house stated, "that a man who did his best deserved a new suit of clothes with no unnecessary delay." Then Dake, listening in

dumb, awkward amazement, learned by what means he was to secure the much-coveted new suit that very day.

The rest was settled with the business man's executive promptness. Furnished with a line to the great clothing-house, Dake had no difficulty in securing all he wanted.

"Well, I am satisfied there is more in fresh, well-fitting broadcloth than I ever imagined," was Tom's first comment, when Dake ceased. "Why, Cramley, it has made another fellow of you."

There was a twinkle of amusement, with a good deal of some complex feeling, in Dake's eyes.

"I know it's made me feel like one," he said.

The two had to-night the longest walk they had yet taken together. Probably neither could tell to-day just how it came about, but on this occasion Tom drew out of his companion some further account of his childhood.

Dake's father had been a sailor — so young Draycott learned — who had died at sea, before his son could remember him. Things had gone from bad to worse with the widow, until at last she turned to whiskey as her one solace in poverty and hardship. When she was herself she was tearful and remorseful, seeking to atone by kindness for past neglect or worse things. But as time went on the bondage of habit grew stronger, until soul and body were utterly demoralized. A besotted condition alternated with

a frenzied one in almost regular sequence. It was a wonder the boy managed to pull through those early years of squalor, starvation, and cruel beatings.

Kind people sometimes visited the mother and son in their attic, and showed an interest in the boy. In one of his mother's sober moments she had been persuaded to send her son to a child's kindergarten in the neighborhood. Afterwards he took his turn in the public schools, where he learned to read and write, and something of arithmetic and geography. Then his mother found one sort or another of employment for her small boy, and squandered his scant wages on her drams.

When he was a little past thirteen, she had a fall in one of her sprees, and took to her bed. She never rose from it.

Her death was probably a blessing to Dake. He was alone in the world now, a mere child, to fight his way unaided, by dint of his young wits and muscles. It was greatly to his credit that he had come up from the misery and vice of such a childhood and boyhood as clean and wholesome as he seemed in mind and body—no taint in his blood, no smirch in his talk.

This struck Tom, who made a tentative inquiry or two in that direction.

"I wonder, Dake, how you kept clear of — of — all the worst things."

"I didn't ketch on there much," replied Dake, with a little involuntary movement of disgust. "Of course I've been in plenty of rows, but I liked to run wild too well to risk the lockup. When it came to drink, I'd seen too much of that, you know. I did try it, once or twice, with some cronies; but it made me horribly sick, and I swore off, as I did after I'd had my second plug of tobaccor. Maybe it was my tramps I was al'ays hankerin' for, that saved me from gamblin' and wuss."

"It's been awfully rough on you, Dake," said Tom, with a fresh access of sympathy and respect for his companion. "While you were talking I was wondering whether I should have come out as clean from all that muck and mire. But you've got a chance to make something of your life now — thank God for that!"

The street-lamp shone full on Dake's face. A hard, bitter, resentful look crossed it.

"Oh, as for God, I don't take any stock in him — no, siree! I'm mighty doubtful whether there is one. Anyhow, he ain't been inclined to do the fair thing by me."

There was a little silence. Sceptical talk from the standpoint of youth and inexperience was nothing novel to Tom Draycott, but anything of precisely this sort had never come in his way: he was sure that wrong words would be worse than none. His rejoinder at last had little of his young absoluteness.

"No doubt in your case I should feel like you, Dake, but — there is something more to be said on this matter."

"It's natural you should think that way, Mr. Draycott. I might, too, if I stood in your shoes."

"Oh, confound that mister! From this moment it's to be tabooed between you and me. Do you understand, and will you obey, Dake Cramley?"

"There's no other way for me, you know, Draycott!" replied Dake, with a shy, pleased kind of laugh.

"Well, then, that's settled. Now, to return to our talk. It doesn't seem the square thing on your side, I admit. I've been a lazy, luxurious rascal, with all the prizes for my share, while you've faced the hard knocks and the rough weather. There it is in a nutshell. I don't pretend to fathom it; I can't explain any more than you what it means. But there's just one plank to cling to when all the rest goes to wreck. If there is a God you must be his child as much as I am, and of course he must care for you too."

"Mighty curi's way he's taken of showin' it," interpolated Dake, in a tone balanced between scepticism and indignation. Tom had never heard anything like that from him before.

"It does look so. We can't shirk facts. But you want to be rock-sure before you lay this big heap of trouble at God's door!"

"And where else is a fellow to lay it?" with a kind of passionate fierceness.

"That might take hours to answer; but it strikes me a good many people and circumstances have had a hand in your hard lines. Isn't it just conceivable that God may have meant well by you from the beginning — means it still? Can't we give him the benefit of a doubt?"

The words came to Tom Draycott almost as though another were speaking through him. He had not started with any notion of getting up a religious argument; indeed, his own ideas and opinions on these and related matters were in a state of more or less confusion and chaos at this time. But he was very sorry for Dake, and his heart more than his brain had been in these questions, which seemed so simple and true as they came up to him.

But the words struck to live, quivering fibres in the soul of his companion. All Dake's past, all his childhood's suffering and wretchedness, all the old inarticulate sense of some mighty Power in things, in the universe, hostile, malevolent, vindictive, which haunts the imagination and hardens the heart of the wronged and helpless, rose up now in the soul of Dake Cramley. He stood still, his jaw was set, his eyes had a fierce gleam.

"No!" The negative rang out charged with passionate feeling. "You can't show me a peg to hang a doubt on. If everything's been ag'inst me,

why didn't God make it different? Why didn't he give *me* a chance as he has *you*?"

Challenged in this way, by a soul stung and goaded by its long sense of wrong and injustice, young Draycott's powers of argument failed him; but his heart was very much alive, and that forced his reply.

"My dear fellow, no man, only God himself, could answer that question, and he will take his own time and way to do it."

"And until he does that in a way likely to convince *me*, the best thing I can do for him is to believe that he's nothin', nor nowhere. So far as he's concerned it's all a big sham, anyhow."

The tones, half scoffing, half sneering, suited the words. The mouth, where the fresh-sprouting beard was beginning to show darkly, wore a hard, bitter expression. The boy snapped his fingers scornfully in the air.

"I suppose we might go on arguing until the crack of doom, and it would do no good," subjoined Tom, feeling rather helpless and defeated. In a moment, however, he continued with a fresh access of energy and decision: —

"But as for God's letting you go to the dogs and not caring, and making a pampered favorite of me — I don't believe it. I tell you Dake Cramley, in face of all your facts, I *won't* believe it. That part is all rot. I might be a selfish dog enough to

make the most of my own share; but what could I think of a God who calls himself Father, and cares for only a part of his children?"

In the wavering street-light, it seemed to Tom that Dake's face softened a little.

"Besides, he *did* try to start you well, or you wouldn't have come up the solid, vigorous, healthy fellow who stands in your boots to-night. I know things got into a bad tangle for you early; but the world, at any rate, is a good place. You must own that, when you remember how often you've got out of the slums which God *didn't* make, and had a jolly day in the woods which he *did*."

Dake laughed here a short, amused laugh, which showed the lessened tension of his feelings.

"I won't deny the jolly days, but it never struck me God had any hand in them."

"There again, don't you see, you may not have been quite fair to him. Then, I think this is a glorious old night, with the stars up there in the sky. I'm enjoying it for my part hugely."

"Oh, I ketch on there, Draycott!" responded Dake fervently. "It is a good night, the best, take it all together, I ever had in my life, and I owe it to you."

"Well, then, are you sure — hang it all, Dake — I am not much, and anyhow, a fellow doesn't want to put it in words; but you know what I mean?"

Dake turned eyes alive with loyal devotion on Tom Draycott.

"If I thought God had anything to do with bringing *you* in my way, I'd think lots of him all the rest of my life!"

Tom tried to turn it off lightly.

"Do you mean to say you set all that store by me?" speaking the thing which came uppermost.

But the tide which swelled now in Dake's soul bore down all his shyness, all his life-long habit of self-repression.

"Draycott," he said, his voice not quite steady, "you've been the best thing that ever came to me in this world, better than anything I ever dreamed of. You talk about God — if he'd been as good to me as you have, there's nothin' in the world he could want me to be or do for him, that I wouldn't stand up all-fired quick and say, 'Here's your man!'"

Tom Draycott looked at the youth swinging along by his side, and he had a curious, half awesome feeling that, in some faint shadowy way, he had come nearer to representing God's love and pity to Dake Cramley than anything else in the world — he, Tom Draycott!

By this time it had grown quite late. The two had walked far out on Beacon Street, and when they turned at last and retraced their steps, they only broke the silence occasionally with some ordinary remark.

Sometimes a policeman glanced at the two, but there was nothing now in Dake's dress or appear-

ance which set the other to wondering how the pair could be chums.

As they drew near the bridge, Tom saw the Harvard car. They wrung each other's hands and parted. But Dake stood motionless, watching the car bearing away the only friend he had on earth, until it had quite disappeared.

There was only a handful of people inside. Tom shot a glance over them, and was relieved to find they did not include any of his classmates. He was in no mood for the usual Sophomore talk and hilarity. He threw himself into a corner, and he said to himself:—

"You are the most colossal hypocrite on this planet, Tom Draycott! Talking religion to that poor fellow, in a way which would have done credit to some cut-and-dried old Puritan! What would Dorothy think! What a stupendous joke it would all be to your classmates! Are you the most arrant humbug in the world, and has it cropped out to-night for the first time?"

But though young Draycott was thoroughly honest when he berated himself in this fashion, he could not feel a twinge of remorse. In his deepest consciousness, he knew that he had *felt* every word which he had spoken to Dake Cramley.

XIII

KEYNOTES AND QUICKSANDS

THE weeks wore on. The skies of the New England May deepened into sapphire, and the fresh verdure, a great emerald sea, swept over the land. The violets unclosed their blue, prayerful eyes in the woods; the dandelions' yellow bravery began to glitter in the grass by the roadsides; the clean, sweet scent of the lilacs, the rich honeyed breath of the syringas, mingled in the air.

The year seemed to take up all things, even human hearts, into its youth and gayety. The earth decked all its brown bareness with flower-brocaded tapestries to greet the advancing June.

During these days Tom Draycott and Dake Cramley met occasionally. As the Sophomore year drew to its close, the former's time was consumed by all sorts of college matters. Between digging for examinations, foot-ball games, rowing matches, bicycle races, and the thousand things which fire the Sophomore heart and absorb the Sophomore mind, Tom found it difficult to command an hour for himself merely, out of the twenty-four. He insisted to the house-audience, composed of Dorothy and Mrs.

Dayles, that no beast of burden was driven and goaded as he was, and that, with his breathless days and nights, the flesh was actually dropping from his bones.

He managed in this way to elicit considerable sympathy, although the highly-colored rhetoric was, of course, received with due grains of allowance.

But the demands on young Draycott's time were not, at this period, confined to the college. The young people in the vicinity of Red Knolls organized all sorts of spring gatherings and merrymakings. Tableaus, lawn parties, private theatricals, informal festivals, followed each other in graceful and picturesque sequence.

Tom was a favorite with women and girls. He was considered a great card at all these junketings. Some robust morale, perhaps, saved his head from being turned by the flatteries. He had beside, at this particular phase of adolescence, a tolerant, good-natured indifference to all youthful femininity. Dorothy, who was held responsible for her brother's presence on these occasions, found her task no sinecure. Of course, she confided her vexations to Mrs. Dayles, when the pair were alone together.

"Girls without brothers have no idea what sisters with them have to undergo! I shiver inwardly whenever I see Tom Draycott's name on a fresh card of invitation. I know perfectly what that means for me. He is sure to protest, and vow off-hand he

won't stir an inch; and then such a time as I have, coaxing and reasoning, and stroking his fur the right way, and holding my tongue and my temper, until at last he goes off with a kind of grunt which I take for a promise, and act on it before he can revoke anything!"

"But you know, my dear," said the soft elder voice, "he is at his wits' end just at this time, and we must make allowance."

"Of course we must, Nanty Dayles."

Dorothy waltzed across the room, her eyes sparkling with fun and laughter, and gave the elder woman a hearty, girlish hug. "As though I envied the girls who hadn't brothers, or didn't know that Tom was the most aggravating, mulish, dearest, best-hearted fellow in the world!"

During this time of high pressure and multiform interests, young Draycott did not forget Dake Cramley. Tom had a feeling — perhaps only half analyzed — that he held to that youth a relation which he did not to any other creature in the universe.

Tom was perfectly aware, too, he was the only person whom Dake really loved — absolutely believed in. He had seen that in his eyes which made him certain that Dake would, on occasion, lay down his life for him. Such a consciousness cannot fail to touch a generous nature, and you must have discovered before this time much that was generous and noble in Tom Draycott's make-up. He felt largely

responsible for Dake's happiness — for his future; and there was mingled with the feeling a certain unconscious sense of gratitude for the other's worshipful affection. The thought of the immense contrast between his real self and Dake's estimate of him had a wholesome influence on the natural conceit and arrogance of youth. Indeed, Tom Draycott was at his best when he thought of Dake Cramley, or was with him.

So, despite the pace which he held at this time, the young man managed occasionally to "sandwich in an hour for a run over the Charles and a walk with Dake Cramley."

Tom was struck, as their acquaintance grew, by the flashes of mother-wit, by the odd humor and the shrewd observations on men and events, which he found in the boy so late emerged from the slums. Plainly, he had been worth saving.

Tom made inquiries about his friend's lodgings, and learned that these were satisfactory. Meredith had given him a line to the landlady, which had secured his admission to her table, and a small one-windowed attic under the roof; but Dake's previous habits had not inclined him to be critical, and a prince might have envied his slumber on the small cot.

Then, Dake Cramley had something of the freshness and interest of a new "find" to the Harvard undergraduate. What a fight that young fellow had made

to get his bit of standing-room in the world — no big, warm-sheltered, soft-lined place, such as had fallen to the share of Tom Draycott and his companions!

Dake had been a newsboy; he had belonged to the snow-brigade; he had worked on the coal-wharves and on the railroad. All these varied occupations had toughened his muscles and sharpened his wits, and given him some shrewd insight into human nature; indeed, he unconsciously modified some of young Draycott's opinions which, with his nineteen years, he had regarded fixed as the poles.

There was no obsequiousness about Dake. This fact often struck Tom. The boy was as direct and simple with his friend as though they stood on the same social and mental plane.

Of course, there was much to criticise in his vernacular; but Tom was never revolted by a vulgar word or idea. Whatever Dake had seen or heard in his old life, no syllable ever crossed his lips which could not have been repeated in the presence of Tom's mother or sister. He sometimes reflected that he could not have said as much for all his classmates.

Had you met the two stalwart youths in some long golden twilight, striding along the Common or the sidewalk, absorbed in talk, their loud, hearty laughs ringing occasionally on the air, you might have thought them the merriest of chums — this strangely assorted pair — the one straight from the halls of his Alma Mater, and a home atmosphere of highest refine-

ment and culture, with the habits and traditions of his ancestry in the very texture of his being; while his companion had been “bankrupted from his birth,” and nurtured amid the vice and misery of the North End slums.

As to what Dake Cramley thought of Tom Draycott — but I shall leave him to speak for himself a little later.

XIV

THE QUIET BEFORE THE STORM

THE year swept on triumphantly into June. Amid the dazzling sunlight, the fragrant air, the lavish bloom, of the northern summer, the days drew toward the solstice.

At this time a long gap occurred between the meetings of the young Sophomore and the warehouse hand. This was inevitable. Tom was "over head and ears," as he described the rush of things about him, in the closing days of his Sophomore year.

But Tom was now quite at ease about his *protégé* — believed that he had "secured a fine berth for him, that all his future would be the smoothest kind of sailing, and that he would come out a grand fellow, despite early drawbacks."

Tom's nineteen years had, of course, afforded him little experience of human nature, beyond his own more or less related type. He was soon to have a new lesson, and a severe one; he was to find himself brought to bay by the mighty forces of heredity, environment, and habit.

One day toward noon, Tom, after a rush into Bos-

ton on some errand, found himself in the vicinity of the warehouse of Meredith, Max, & Co. He made a dash for it.

Chagrined to learn Dake was out, he seized the opportunity to make some inquiries of a head workman regarding his friend.

“He’s a good feller enough,” said the man, staring at Tom curiously from under his bushy, dusty eyebrows, “al’ays on hand at stroke of the hour — goes into the work with reg’lar vim.”

This report was all which could be desired, and yet Tom had a feeling that the tone or manner did not quite emphasize the words. He looked at the rugged, honest face before him. Was the man holding something back?

“That’s all right so far as the work goes,” said Tom frankly. “But I set great store by that fellow, and I should like to hear — well — a little more all-round praise of him.”

The workman adjusted the paper turban on his temples. His look grew slightly more confidential. “Nothin’ to lay a finger on,” he replied. “But he seems rather an odd fish when all’s said. Ready to do a good turn when it comes in his way; but keeps a close mouth, and not forrard at makin’ friends. Seems rather gruff of late, and goes at the work as though he was fightin’ for his life. The way he handles a heavy load has made me afear’d, sometimes, he’d hurt himself.”

“And that’s all?” interrogated Tom, a good deal relieved.

“That’s all, sir. Not a thing against him, you see, only don’t march jest in line with the others.”

Tom made up his mind that Dake did not find it all halcyon at the warehouse. He reflected that he had been at the grind two months, with no let up.

On the spur of the moment he resolved to see Dake the following evening, though that involved his sacrificing a concert at Sanders Theatre.

He whipped out his pad, scribbled a few lines to Dake, appointing a meeting for the next night.

In the late summer dusk, Tom Draycott turned into the Common. He glanced at the west. Vast heaps of bronze-colored clouds lay there, their edges glowing with vivid pink and fiery gold.

The young figure in its gray suit, familiar now, rose from a bench near the entrance and approached.

“Hullo, Dake! Awfully glad to see you. Couldn’t screw out a minute for you all this time. Hard lines for a fellow just now at Harvard.”

It was pleasant to hear the old hearty tones. Dake’s eyes had not worn so bright a look for a week.

They turned together out of the Common. If Tom found the interval long since their last meeting, he little suspected what slow-wearing æons it had seemed to his comrade.

As they drew under a street-lamp, Tom bent a

sharp, interrogative glance at his companion. It struck him Dake had grown rather thin, and that he had a wearied, half-sullen look; but the light glanced and was gone, and Tom was not certain.

"Things jolly as ever at the warehouse?" he asked tentatively.

"Nothin' to find fault with," replied Dake in his most staccato style.

"This sort of weather must be rough on you down there."

"Hot as blazes to-day; but I don't mind," subjoined Dake.

"It hasn't been cool at Cambridge. Mercury got into the nineties. I say, they ought to let up on you fellows through the dog-days."

"That's what they're goin' to do."

Dake's voice did not indicate that the prospect afforded him much pleasure.

Neither of the young men was up to his usual plane of talk. Each was conscious of this in the other; and each attributed it to the influences of the night, which were singularly close and depressing.

Young Draycott was fatigued with the strain of the last weeks, and in no mood for personal inquisition; while Dake, with an occasional effort to keep up his share in the conversation, was mostly monosyllabic.

At last Tom did break out with a good deal of verve.

"I see how it is, old boy. You are having too hard a grind just now; you ought to let up steam a little. One of these days you must get an afternoon off, and we'll have a tramp in Middlesex Fells. Won't that be jolly?"

"Powerful," responded Dake, and all the old grateful devotion was in the glance which he shot up at Tom Draycott.

It went, as it always did, to some secret place, quick and warm, in the other's heart.

"You see, Dake, I sha'n't let you slide — not an inch," he continued earnestly, "though at this particular crisis I have about as much freedom as a hard-driven dray-horse. But I sha'n't go at this gait much longer, and then you and I will have our turn."

The two had walked to the Harvard Bridge. Tom's hour was up. His car came along. He boarded it, shouting back to Dake, "Keep a brave heart, old fellow! if any trouble turns up, I'll see you through."

With the kind, cheery, confident voice ringing in his ears and heart, Dake Cramley stood still and watched the moving car-light until it grew dim and disappeared. Afterward he turned and gazed at the steel-gray waters of the Charles as they tumbled past him under the stars; he set his jaw hard, and there was a fierce gleam in his eyes. The water seemed to fascinate him.

At last, and with a sudden start, and hard-drawn breaths, like one who wakes from a nightmare, he turned and walked swiftly away as though from some fear that pursued and haunted him. But life was quick and bounding in every vein of Dake Cramley's body. The temptation was over for that time.

XV

A JULY NIGHT'S CRISIS

THE summer solstice had passed.

Class Day, with all its gay scenes, its crowds and excitements, its reunions and partings, was over now. The old college buildings, which had echoed so late to the loud mirth and the ringing tread of young manhood in its heyday of life and joy, were left to silence and sunshine for the rest of the dog-days. The only sounds now were the summer winds dreaming among the ancient elm boughs; the fairest sights now were the long, pensive elm shadows stretching themselves on the sward over which joyous groups, made up of gallant youths, and girlhood in its loveliest blossoming, had so recently loitered.

Tom Draycott had passed through the dreaded "exams" with credit to himself, and was now a Junior—a fact which afforded an opportunity for endless quizzing on the part of his sister.

It was sometime in early July before he saw Dake Cramley again. After several days of fiery, prostrating heat, which had scorched the air and parched the land, the east wind blew again, and the city, which had wilted under the sultry days and nights, lay

cooled and rejoicing in the sweet breath from the sea.

All Boston which had not rushed to the shore or the mountains was out that night drinking in the grateful breeze.

After the first greeting on the mall, young Draycott had a prescient instinct that all was not well with his friend. The people crowding the sidewalks would interfere with conversation. Tom proposed they should turn into the Public Garden, where, after a brief search, they found a bench to themselves.

As they crossed a shaft of light, Tom had darted a penetrating glance at his companion's face. There was no doubt now that it had grown thin, and something had gone out of it, out of the boy's gait and tone too.

"Well," Tom began in the old familiar way, as soon as they were seated, "things gone smoothly all this time when I couldn't get round to you?"

"Nothin's happened, special," said Dake with a glum air; and he stared down at his boots.

"We've had torrid weather enough to take the heart out of anything. I hope they haven't kept you at the grind through it."

"No; they let us up a good deal. But I didn't mind; I'd as lief keep at the work."

"That's plucky, Dake." Then, after a few moments' pause, Tom turned suddenly, and laid his hand on the other's knee. "Something's the matter," he said. "Make a clean breast of it."

Dake turned and faced his companion silently for a few moments. In the shadows, Tom could not see what the eyes said; but he waited rather breathlessly.

At last the words came, few, but straight to the point.

"Yes; something has happened. I've got to clear out, Draycott!"

"Clear out!"

"I've got to leave the work!"

"What have you been doing, Dake?"

It was natural, considering the past, that Tom's suspicions should point in one direction. Dake saw what this question meant. He did not resent it. Indeed, he seemed incapable of resenting anything to-night.

"No," he said; "it's nothing of that sort. I've got a clean record at the warehouse. They'll tell you so."

He spoke now with an energy and earnestness which forced conviction on his hearer.

"Anybody been setting on you?"

"No; I've no complaint to make. They've al'ays treated me on the square."

"And nobody wants you to go?"

"No reason in the world to think so."

"And do you mean to tell me, Dake Cramley, that, for no cause whatever, you intend to turn your back on such a berth — cut the chance of your life-time?"

“I knew you couldn’t understand, Draycott,” the old hopeless tone and manner reasserting themselves, the eyes once more on his boots. “But I’ve *got* to go. I should have done that weeks ago, as soon as the clothes was fairly paid up for, but I’ve kept on jest to see you once more, so that you’d remember I didn’t go off like a sneak, without telling you.”

“What are you going for, Dake?” touched, in spite of his waxing anger, by this last remark.

“I’m goin’ because I can’t help it,” the voice broke out now, hoarse and a-quiver with passion. “I can’t stand it any longer. That steady grind, day after day, week after week, and no change, is more than I can bear. It seems as though I should go mad under it, and kill myself, or somebody else. My blood gets ragin’. I’ve got to clear out!” he repeated with a dogged air, his voice thick with suppressed passion. “I tell you I’ve got to clear out!”

“And where do you propose to go?”

“I shall set out for the woods. I shall prowls round and round ’em, and no man my master. I know now how wild things feel. Of course you can’t understand. You was brought up diff’rent. But it’s in my blood and bones. I thought I could stand the pull; I tried to—honest, I did. But I found it was too much for me.”

“And so,” Tom rejoined in a hard, unsympathetic voice, “you propose to run off now from the best luck that ever came to a fellow in your shoes; you pro-

pose to turn your back on every friend you've got, on your one chance to mount the ladder, to make an honest man of yourself; and you intend to do all this in order to scour the woods, to turn tramp and vagabond again, to be homeless and starved and ragged, in short, to go back to the devil you came from!"

"I knew it would look like that to you," Dake replied in a sullen, despairing tone. "P'rhaps I'd better cleared out and not told you."

All Tom's faith in Dake Cramley went to pieces, or seemed to, on the instant. The shock was so sudden, the disappointment so bitter, that speech did not have way at first — only thoughts that stung and rankled.

"What a head and crown of idiots he had proved himself — he, posing for a philanthropist, and imagining he could smooth down this cub of the slums — this creature with his wild beast instincts clamoring to roam the woods and the jungles — into a civilized, respectable human being! A fellow who had done his best to knock him down and rob him on the highway too!" Tom felt he himself deserved to be set in the stocks.

Then speech had its turn. It was not long. The voice had a ring of hard, scornful irony; the words came from a white heat of passion.

"As it appears, you are deliberately bound to go to the dogs, I suppose nobody can help you. Per-

haps the sooner you take yourself out of decent people's way the better. But you may be sure, Dake Cramley, I have had my lesson. The next time I keep a fellow out of the lockup and raise him from the slums, and he succeeds in playing your game on me, I shall be older than I am now — that is all!”

While he spoke he had risen. Dake rose also.

“I ain't anything to say for myself, Draycott,” he began in a slow, husky voice, which gradually cleared and deepened with intense feeling. “It wouldn't do any good, but, though I am bound to go to the dogs, as you say, I shall al'ays know you wanted to save me; you did your best for me; you was the one real friend I had in the world!”

He had moved a little while he spoke, and the light struck his face. One, seeing the look in his eyes as he bent them on Tom, might have thought of a spirit turning away from the threshold of heaven into the outer darkness.

Then he too turned and walked rapidly away. Tom Draycott stood still. He had heard the words; he had seen the look. Both had gone straight as an arrow to all that was generous and noble in his young, fiery nature. The reaction of feeling was swift, immense. A great rush of pity swept away the wrath which had worked in heart and brain. His last words to Dake came up now, and seemed to fill the air with their stern, pitiless ultimatum. Could he let the boy go away forever with that look

in his eyes? It would haunt him through all his future!

He must find him at once. Moments were precious now. If he lost sight of him to-night, he might never see him again.

Tom rushed out of the Public Garden.

XVI

THE QUIET AFTER THE STORM

YOUNG Draycott dashed along the sidewalk at a speed which came near upsetting some of the sauntering crowd. He did not pause to apologize; he was ready to face armies now for a glimpse of that half-boyish figure with the strong, erect shoulders and the rapid gait. Tom held himself steadily along Tremont Street, glancing up the thoroughfares at right angles. He was not at all certain he was on the right track; he had no definite knowledge of Dake's lodgings. It was quite conceivable, Tom reflected, that, wretched and desperate, he might at once set out for the country.

Tom had kept on for half a mile, when he caught a glimpse some distance off of the figure he was seeking. The crowds masked it the next moment, but Tom dashed over the curbstone and rushed toward it.

Dake was forging ahead from mere force of habit toward his boarding-place. Whatever plans he had formed, he was plunged in too deep wretchedness to attempt carrying them out that night.

A sudden imperative touch was on his shoulder. He started, and saw Tom Draycott.

"Come back, Dake!" said the kindly, resolute voice, which had been for months the sweetest sound in the world to the other's ears. "I've had a hard race for you."

Dake faced about without a word, but the next instant he staggered. Tom noticed that, and slipped his arm in the other's. They went back to their old rendezvous in the Public Garden.

All young Draycott's will was in arms now — that strong, defiant will of youth, which believes that no obstacle can daunt it, no hostility vanquish it, no fate compel it.

The two stood still under the elms. The lights at their feet were enmeshed with shadows. The winds drowsed in the branches overhead.

Tom's feeling burst into eager speech.

"You mustn't mind what I said just now, Dake. I was horribly disappointed and angry, and it all had to come out at one blast."

"I didn't mind," rejoined Dake earnestly. "I've been sayin' harder things of myself for weeks past."

"Well," continued Tom in his impetuous fashion, "the thing now is to find our way out of these woods. I sha'n't give you up, Dake Cramley. That fact is fixed as the eternal hills. I am going to keep a grip on you like grim death!"

There was a momentary glimmer of amusement in Dake's eyes. Something like a smile unbent the hard lines of his mouth.

“You are the best fellow in the world, Draycott. But you see, at the last pinch, it all comes down to myself. Nobody can do it for me.”

“That is the sensible thing to say, only I wish you would put a little more vim into it.”

They had dropped on the bench now, and the leaves overhead danced in the rising breeze, and the shadows and the lights flickered at their feet.

Dake turned and looked at his companion silently. Then all the pent-up struggle and misery of the last weeks broke into a swelling flood of passionate speech.

“I *have* tried, Draycott. God — if there is one — knows I am telling you the truth. When I first felt it comin’ on, I braced up and swore I’d stick to the work if I died for it. Day after day when it grew wuss, I held on, until it seemed I should go mad, and I wished I could throw myself into the river and make an end of it. The only thing that kept me at the treadmill so long, was thinkin’ of *you*. I said I’d be the biggest scoundrel that ever went unhung, if I run off after all the pains you’d taken for me. Why, the meanest cur you ever flung a bone to wouldn’t have done that! Do you think I didn’t remember?” His voice trembled, his features worked. “Do you think I didn’t know when you met me that day on the street, and I wanted to sink into the earth for shame of my old duds, and you stopped and shook hands so hearty as though I’d been a spick and span

dandy, and you called me your friend to that big swell standin' by, and starin', and wonderin' what it all meant? It wasn't because I didn't cuss myself every time for thinkin' of clearin' out; but you can't tell what it is to a fellow who's been used all his life to loafin' and trampin' until it's got into his bones and blood, to be shut up between brick walls, day after day. He gits to loathe the work, to feel he must quit it or die. You don't know; you're used to reg'lar habits and hours. All that's in your blood too, but mine's of another strain. It's what you call heredity. I heard a man give a talk on it once, and I came away at the end sayin', 'The poor fellers that train in my company aint got much of a chance anyhow.' "

"Oh, hang your heredity!" exploded Tom, who was reading a new chapter in human nature, and gaining some fresh insight into all his companion had suffered, and of course a livelier sympathy with it. "I see it was all a huge mistake," he continued in a softer tone, "to set you at the grindstone day after day. It was too sudden a change from all your old habits and ways. It was only natural you should kick. But, for all that," his voice deepened and grew tense, "I shall not give you up — not much!"

"Why do you care, Draycott? I ain't wuth it. You better let me slide."

"I haven't analyzed the feeling, but it comes down to this — I am going to save you! Do you understand?"

He rose now, and stood silent a moment or two, looking down on Dake Cramley. Tom's face was white, his jaw was set. A mighty force, a great pity, inspired his will, and expanded his stalwart frame.

“No, sir,” came the low-keyed, dominant voice. “I won't lose you, Dake Cramley, if I have to fight every devil in Inferno to save you!”

Half an hour later, young Draycott was saying in the most quiet, reasonable tone, —

“I see where a good deal of the trouble hinges. You need some change — some fresh interest to take you out of this groove. You've nobody to care for, but one feather-brained fellow who can only snatch an occasional hour at night to see you. If you could only catch on to somebody who would stir you up every day, and give you something to think about, you wouldn't have slumped so.”

“P'rhaps; I don't know,” commented Dake hopelessly.

“Well, it's plain to me as daylight. But I can't decide on the spur of the moment. Then, I've got to be off for a week in the country with my sister. We start to-morrow. It's unlucky it's come just at this time, but I can't cut things. Can you promise, word and honor now, to stick to the warehouse until I return? If you can't, by Jove, I'll knock you down senseless, and have you locked up for the

next week in a private room where nobody will find you! I know a fellow who will see me through it too!" thinking of Steve, the trusty factotum at Red Knolls. "You see, Dake, I'm in life-and-death earnest about this matter!"

"I see you are, Draycott," setting his jaws hard, and looking square in Tom's eyes. "I'll promise you. It seems easy enough to do that now, after our talk. But if the old madness for the fields and the woods and the jolly freedom and the devil-may-care life comes back — I'll fight it out."

"Ah, Dake, can I trust you? Can you trust yourself?" almost groaned Tom, laying his hand on the other's knee.

The youth placed his big palm on Tom's hand.

"I'll stay if it kills me," he said solemnly.

They moved together to the entrance. On the sidewalk the crowds were getting thin. The night was growing late. They grasped each other's hands, looked again in each other's eyes, and parted without a word — one for his small close room under the attic roof, the other for his spacious, handsomely appointed chamber at Red Knolls.

But that had happened, which, if the two lived to be old men, would make one July night dwell forever in their memories.

XVII

A NORTH END DRAMA

THE fever that was like a consuming fire in pulse and brain, the hunger, like the fierce clamoring instinct of the chained wild beast, for the woods and the wide spaces, and the old sweet life of roaming freedom, were coming back again. Dake Cramley knew the signs. For three days, under the potent spell of one memory, he had kept the tumult at bay.

That evening, his supper finished, he went out for a walk. The dusk was slowly gathering in the summer air. The light wind which had cooled the day had gone down with the sunset.

Dake unconsciously took his way to the North End. He had of late kept clear of his former haunts, but in his gloom and restlessness old habits asserted themselves. He moved rapidly along through the narrow streets, the unsavory smells, the gathering groups of unkempt men and women. Some of these stared curiously at the youth; for his dress, even his gait and air, suggested a respectability not indigenous to that locality. By this time the lights were beginning to flare through the dingy windows and open doors of the saloons. Loud, coarse voices in

talk alternated with shouts of ribald jest and mirth. The narrow, untidy thoroughfare was lined with huddled, decaying houses and tumble-down rookeries. He passed groups — men and women — with bold, leering glances or dull, besotted faces. The general disorder, the squalor, the stifling, noisome scents, above all, the humanity, soiled, debased, vicious, showed that Dake Cramley had strayed into one of the lowest quarters of the North End. Absorbed in his thoughts, he had not been conscious where his steps were tending; and when he awoke to his environment, — not an unfamiliar one in his boyhood, — all his finer instincts revolted. He turned sharply on his heel. He was not really alarmed; he had a good deal of reliance, when it came to the pinch, on his own muscles; but he preferred to avoid any chance of bringing these into play; and he was quite sure the locality was not one in which respectable people were inclined to venture after dusk. He had gone only a few paces when he stopped sharply. A cry had arrested him — a child's cry, wild with pain and terror. The next moment a tiny figure staggered blindly out of the narrow, cluttered alley on his right. The small white face, the big, strained eyes, with the fright and horror in them, must have moved any heart which held one lingering fibre of human pity.

A long red gash, from which the blood made a slow, trickling stream, curved dangerously near the temple. The hair, a heap of soft, shining gold, hung

about the peaked face. Had Dake been more familiar with the canvases of the old masters, he would have thought of saints and aureoles.

He had barely time to take in the small figure as the child, in her wild effort to escape, drew near without perceiving him, when another form emerged from the alley.

It was that of a heavy-built, stumbling man, with a big, blotched, drink-sodden face, a coarse, ragged beard, and an ugly gleam at that moment in his bloodshot eyes. He carried a small cowhide in one hand, and he was growling and swearing to himself as he glanced stupidly, but with some malicious intent, around him. Then, catching sight of the girl, he reeled toward her with loud curses and uplifted whip.

Swift as lightning Dake sprang forward, grasped the child in one arm, and then turned and confronted the man, with a rage in his veins which gave him the strength of ten.

The bloodshot eyes stared in wrathful amazement at this new appearance on the scene. It was a force with which the man had not counted, and it required some moments for his fuddled wits to adjust themselves to the new situation. But the early, ugly phase of intoxication was uppermost; and he balanced himself on rather unsteady feet and shouted hoarsely, —

"What business you with that brat, I say? Let her down in a trice, or she won't be the only one that'll git a big wolloppin'."

A volley of oaths followed this threat.

It was time to act now. Dake gathered the little palpitating creature close with one strong arm, and drew up with clenched hand and blazing eyes to the enemy.

"Strike her one blow, you brute," he said in a low, determined voice, "and I'll smash your face into such shape that you'll never be able to get it right again."

It was the talk of the slums, but it was in a good cause this time.

With that fiery gaze, with that big, clenched hand under his eyes, the coward at bottom of the brute was a good deal startled. He tried to bluff it out however. He swore, and swung the cowhide threateningly, while Dake kept him at bay with one powerful arm, the frightened, sobbing creature held meanwhile, as in a vice, by the other.

By this time a small, curious crowd of men and women had congregated. No words were needed. The scene before their eyes explained itself. There were fathers and mothers in that frowsy, unsavory group. Dake's youth, and the child in his arms with the cruel, disfiguring gash, formed an object lesson which appealed to primeval sympathies, and carried the crowd in his favor.

By slaps on his shoulder, by trenchant speeches, too often interlarded with oaths, by the women's pitying ejaculations, as they gazed on the gashed fore-

head, the crowd expressed its unanimous sentiments. Threatening looks and menacing gestures were freely lavished on the cause of this excitement. These people were in a mood likely to become dangerous.

"Ride his old carcass on a rail!" suggested one.

"Treat it to a thick coat of tar and feathers!" rejoined another.

"His own child too!" This last interjection came from one of the women.

The pointed threats began at last to have some effect on their object.

"That's good!" he chuckled hoarsely. Then, clutching his ragged beard with a hiccoughy laugh, he went on.

"I've no more property in the brat than you have. She ain't no more kin to me than the rest of ye; and what right has she to sit up there under my roof, and eat my bread, and stare at me with her big, solemn eyes, as if she was the day of judgment! Blast her!"

"Hear the old tough!" yelled a hoarse voice from the crowd. "Boys, if you'll give the signal, I'll head the rush on him."

At this critical moment there was a diversion. A woman, wiry, angular, sallow, hurried breathless out of the alley. Everything about her bore marks of poverty, toil, and discouragement; still, she was in every respect superior to her husband, who gazed at her now with an ugly look in his eyes, but a consciousness of the crowd's temper kept him silent.

The woman took in Dake and the figure he held with one rapid, frightened glance. At sight of the bleeding face she gave a shocked cry. Then she turned on her husband.

"You've done it now!" she exclaimed in a high, excited voice. "Didn't I tell you, if you must beat either of us, I'd rather it 'ud be me than Daise?" — "He wouldn't 'a' done it, if he'd been in his senses." The woman turned to Dake now with that instinct of defence for the male biped which no amount of brutality or outrage on his part can uproot in the Englishwoman of the lower classes. "It al'ays do madden him to see her about when he's on a spree. I try to keep her out o' his sight such times, but I stepped out o' doors to-night afore he came in."

She lifted a corner of her apron to her eyes; she made, on the whole, an impression in her favor.

"Is it true — what he says — that she don't belong to you?" queried Dake, eager to satisfy himself on so vital a point.

"Yes; she's been with us most a year now, but she ain't one of our own kith."

She appealed to some of the crowd, who, with a chorus of affirmatives, confirmed this statement.

"Whose child is she, then?" continued Dake, turning from one to the other with the air of a judge.

"Lord knows whether she's got kith or kin in the world. I don't."

"How did you come by her?"

"A woman who took care of her mother afore she died, and said she was a lady, come to live near us. The woman had a fall and died sudden. I was with her at the last. She begged me to look out for Daise."

The group, enlarging by fresh aggregations to its outer circle, had listened silently to this colloquy. Now a voice from the midst chuckled, —

"Yes; and a mighty fat plum it turned out for you, for you grabbed all the woman left behind as soon as she was buried."

There was a chorus of guffaws, and more than one voice shouted: "That's so!"

"I've never sought to rob the child," replied the woman, with a rising flush on her sallow cheek. "I've al'ays tried to be good to Daise," she added appealingly.

"Yes; you've scanted your own flesh for that brat!" broke in her husband, who was rapidly subsiding now into a maudlin, grumbling state.

The little golden head lay pillowed against Dake's shoulder; the little frightened heart throbbed against his own. All his brain, quickened by his feeling, was alert now. He made up his mind on the instant.

"I'm going to carry this child off from your drunken brute of a husband. She's none of yours, you say; and as you can't keep her from bein' mauled in this fashion, I'll find somebody who can."

Dake squared his young shoulders, and looked very brave and strong as he said this. He carried the crowd with him. It cheered him lustily; and amid oaths intended to be plaudits, more than one voice shouted, —

“You’re a brick, younker.”

“It’s a good riddance to the brat! You’re welcome to her,” growled the man, whose cruelty was the occasion of this tumult, as he roused himself once more from the growing stupor of debauch.

Threatening gestures on all sides cowed him in an instant. One menacing speech voiced the general feeling:—

“Shut up there, or you’ll get a drubbin’ for the one you give the kid, which will lay you up for a week.”

Dake started off now with his burden. The crowd made way for him. He had no distinct purpose where he was to go, what he was to do with the small creature, still heaving with sobs in his strong arms, and who had no other shelter in the wide world. He kept on with long, brisk strides, with a blind instinct to reach a more decent locality.

The scene on which he little dreamed so much was to hang for himself, had not probably occupied half an hour. In less than a quarter of that time Dake had struck into the long thoroughfare which, some distance off, made a junction with Hanover Street. When he gained the corner he paused for a few

moments to decide on his next step. He looked down with unutterable pity on the little shining head. What was he to do with it?

This was the supreme question which faced the youth in the deepening dusk of that July night. Some talk which he had caught the day before at the warehouse, of a “Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children,” came up in his memory now. Should he ask a policeman the way to it, and give the child into the care of strangers? Perhaps they would send her back after awhile to the misery from which he had just rescued her. That thought made him hesitate. At this crucial moment the softest little arm stole about his neck.

The thought of his boarding-house suddenly recurred to Dake. It had afforded him scant shelter and sufficient food in the way of home, but hardly more than that. The venture was a rather desperate one. Dake remembered that his landlady had taken pains to speak to him several times of late. Perhaps she had more heart than he had given her credit for.

Dake Cramley faced about suddenly, and started for his boarding-house.

XVIII

MRS. JEMIMA BRAY HAS A HEART

IT was a large, old-fashioned, three-storied, dingy brick dwelling, within easy walking distance of the northern railroad stations. The house had greatly declined from its ancient smartness, and was in the heart of a crowded, more or less noisy, locality. Most of its former neighbors had made way for warehouses and business blocks, and the building itself must have had a sense of impending doom in every timber and joist.

The house had a high, much-worn flight of stone steps; the façade was dingy, and a good deal defaced by time; and the green window-blinds had probably received their last coat of paint.

Under this roof, which, despite its shabbiness, still retained some air of better days, Mrs. Jemima Bray was keeping up an unequal fight with the world. She, too, had to solve the first problem of existence — the keeping of soul and body together, so hard for friendless, untrained women. She was a childless widow, on the vanishing side of fifty; and misfortune, anxiety, and the struggle for a livelihood made her look older than she was.

The locality was in her favor; and, despite various drawbacks, her house was usually tolerably well filled with patrons — small clerks and workpeople whose salaries did not admit of high priced lodgings. Mrs. Bray had the old, hard task of making both ends meet, with the house-rent — a terrible incubus — haunting her days and nights.

On this particular evening Mrs. Bray was sitting in the small, rather stuffy room back of the parlor, which she reserved for herself. She was a faded-complexioned, sharp-featured woman. Her hair was turning gray and getting scant. All the smooth curves of youth had grown to sharp angles. The eyes, once bright with hope and merriment, were faded and tired now.

There was a sudden, peremptory knock at the door. Mrs. Bray dropped the sewing on which, with an occasional long-drawn sigh, she had been intent for the last hour. Before she could speak the door was flung open, and Dake Cramley entered with a small figure in his arms. The first thing which met the woman's startled glance was the cloud of golden hair; the next she saw the small white face, with the cruel red welt and the stains of blood. Mrs. Bray was on her feet in an instant with a cry of dismay.

Dake spoke at once. In a few short sentences he explained the situation. As Mrs. Bray listened, shocked and breathless, the whole scene was before

her — the child staggering out of the North End alley, the drunken brute pursuing her with uplifted cowhide, the part Dake had taken in the rescue, the gathering crowd, the angry threats, the appearance of the wife on the scene.

"I couldn't leave her there. I had nowhere to take her. There was nothin' to do but bring her here, Mrs. Bray," he concluded, half apologetic, half appealing.

"Of course there wasn't. My poor little lambkin!" All the mother-heart coming to the surface at that pitiful sight.

The child, still quivering with nervous terror, stared up in the strange, kindly face bending over her. What eyes she had too! They were of a deep violet shade, and so big that they seemed half of her small face.

Mrs. Bray bustled out of the room without another word. All her woman's instinct of helpfulness and sympathy was alert now. Dake sat down with the child in his arms. His anxiety about her reception had been put to rest with Mrs. Bray's first cry. In a few moments she returned, bringing a bowl of warm water and soft towels.

"I can do it better if you set her on my lap," she said to Dake.

Then a child's voice wailed through the room.

"Don't let her take me away from you!" The little fingers clutched Dake's sleeve.

They quieted her with soothing words, and settled it between them that Dake should hold her while Mrs. Bray bathed the torn, inflamed flesh.

"You're the puttiest little midget I ever did set eyes on," she exclaimed, as she lightly bathed the long welt on cheek and forehead. "That man ought to be hanged on the first tree who could hurt such a white little innercent as you be! It's wuss than murder! My—what eyes you've got! They make me think of the violets in the holler back of our old orchard. I used to trudge there for 'em every May, when I wasn't bigger'n you. There, now, don't it all feel better?"

"Yes," sighed the child; and a softer expression stole into the scared eyes.

"You look peaked and famished, as though you'd had scant pickin's," continued Mrs. Bray, with her pitying gaze on the small face. "What you need now is somethin' to eat; and you shall have it, too, afore you're many minutes older."

She hurried away once more, all her practical energies enlisted in the service of her pity.

The shining head nestled back in Dake's arms. The child had kept quiet during the bathing process, only wincing occasionally when the water or the careful touch hurt the sensitive flesh.

She lifted her head suddenly with a wild start. The old terror was in her eyes.

"Will *he* come back? Will *he* find the way?" she cried.

"Oh, no! he can't ever find us. If he did — don't you see — I'm here!"

She gazed at Dake with a look of ineffable trust, and then put up her bit of hand, and stroked his cheek softly.

Mrs. Bray was back again in a short time. She brought a tray containing the best her pantry afforded. There was a big mug of milk, and slices of chicken, and a small glass of currant jelly — the sort of things to tempt the appetite and please the eyes of a hungry child.

They all had a hand in that meal. Mrs. Bray held the mug to the small lips till the milk was drained to the bottom, and Dake cut the chicken into dainty mouthfuls.

At last the child drew a long sigh of repletion, and looked up in Mrs. Bray's face.

"It tasted so good!" she said.

A pleased smile smoothed out all the wrinkles in the faded face.

"You feel better now, don't you?" she asked tenderly.

"Oh, ever so much!"

A moment later she was gazing with wide, grave eyes about the room with its faded carpets and dingy furniture; but she had come straight from the North End, and it was fair in her eyes as a palace-chamber.

"Do you and he live here?" she asked, nodding at Dake.

"Yes."

"Just you — all alone?"

"Oh, no! There are plenty of people in the house. But what makes you ask that?"

"I'd rather it would be just you two."

"Well, my dear, nobody here shall give you a mite of trouble."

A little while after this talk, the lashes, long, thick, and of silky-brown, began to droop over the violet eyes. The terrible scene through which she had passed, the peace and comfort which enwrapped her now like an atmosphere, were having their effect on soul and body.

Mrs. Bray brought a pillow, and spread a blanket on her faded chintz-covered lounge.

"It's just the nicest place to sleep," in that caressing tone which one uses to an infant. "You shall lie down here and have a long nap."

There was a swift start; the hunted look leaped again into the eyes; the little face buried itself on Duke's shoulder.

"Don't take me away from him!" she cried.

It required their combined efforts to soothe and persuade her. At last she was coaxed into consenting that he should place her on the lounge if he would promise to stay close by her.

She put her little hand in his large one and would not let go, even when the lids dropped again and she drowsed into broken slumbers, with nervous starts

and moans which went to the heart of those who watched her. But at last nature triumphed, and she sank into the sweet, profound slumber of childhood.

Then Dake softly laid the little hand under the blanket.

After that he and his landlady had a long talk. He related every incident of the drama at North End to his eager and ejaculatory auditor.

The last two hours had effected a surprising change in their mutual relations. Dake's first appearance under Mrs. Bray's roof had not been calculated to impress her in his favor. She had her own standards for the respectability of her table; and Dake's general shabbiness—though he was not absolutely ragged—fell below those. A line from the house of Meredith, Max, & Co., which had furnished her with frequent lodgers, alone secured his admission.

Dake's quiet behavior and his improved exterior had, however, its influence with the landlady and her household. To-night a common sympathy and interest had broken down any last barriers betwixt the two.

Dake showed himself now in a new light to Mrs. Bray—one that did equal honor to his heart, courage, and judgment. When he related how he had paused at the corner of Hanover Street, in doubt what to do with the little waif he had just rescued, Mrs. Bray laid her hand on his arm in the most friendly manner.

"You did just the right thing to bring her here,

Mr. Cramley,” she said. “So long as I have a roof over my head that little angel’s welcome to a shelter under it.”

Her voice broke, her eyes were dim, as she and Dake glanced at the little face which lay so still, swathed in that cloud of shining, tumbled hair.

XIX

HER NAME WAS DAISY ROSS

THE next evening Dake hurried eagerly home. He had had a busy day at the warehouse, and had not been able to return at noon for his dinner.

In the morning, before starting for the warehouse, he had a brief talk with Mrs. Bray. She reported the child still asleep. She had waked two or three times in the night with a wild cry, but Mrs. Bray had soon succeeded in quieting her. Dake went off satisfied that his little waif was in good hands.

All that day, amid the toil and heat, Dake felt the touch of those small fingers on his cheek; a touch that went down into his heart, and made a new lightness and softness there.

The first thing he heard that night, after entering Mrs. Bray's room, was a cry—a child's high-keyed cry of surprise and joy. The next instant a small figure darted across the room, and a little pair of hands reached up eagerly to him.

Dake bent down and lifted the small figure in his arms. A pair of eyes, with the harebells' purple in their depths, gazed at him with such radiant delight as, in all his hard, rough life, had never before shone on Dake Cramley.

As he gazed on the child he was surprised at the change which had taken place in her appearance. Mrs. Bray had not been idle that morning. She had found a small frock, a pretty blue and white barred lawn, all ready to put on and going for a song, because it was getting late in the season. Then she had bought the tiniest pair of black slippers, and some further details of child wardrobe. After a thorough bath and hair-combing the new dress was made to supplant the soiled calico and ripped shoes, which were all the child had brought from her old life.

The hair, soft as gold floss, fell rippling upon the shoulders, which peeped, milk-white flesh, out of the bit of waist yoke. A long slip of court-plaster covered the wound on her forehead, but it would probably heal in a few days.

“I’ve waited and waited so long,” she said in her soft, lisping soprano. “It seemed as though you never would come!”

“Did it? Then you wanted to see me?”

“Oh, awful much! I thought you would unnerstand.”

“Well, I wanted to see you too, but I had lots of work to do, and that kept me away.”

“Will it keep you every day?”

“Not so long, I guess. You’ve had a good time, haven’t you?”

She drew a long breath. “Oh, yes, the beautifullest time in the world.”

"I knew I should leave you in good hands. I said that to-day when I thought about you."

"Did you? Well, Mis' Bray's been as nice as — ever was! She brought me berries from the market this mornin' and such things to eat! Don't you see my new frock too?" smoothing down the skirt folds with a little womanly touch. "And my new shoes?" She held up one slippered foot.

"Yes; you look as putty as a fresh rose."

This was all as novel an experience, and as delightful, to the big fellow as it was to the child.

The infantile prattle went on about all the events of this wonderful day — how she had seen the prettiest black-and-white kitty scurrying along the top of the fence, and the sparrows pecking at crumbs in the back yard, and how Mis' Bray had promised when she got a little better, she should go out there, and sit under the big pear-tree, where the robins had built a nest, and which, though it was such an old tree, held a heap of pears ripening on the top boughs.

At last there came a pause in the bright prattle. The child looked curiously at Dake from under her long lashes. She drew a deep breath.

"I've told you 'most everything about me now," she said. "I want to hear somethin' about you."

"Well, there ain't much to tell. What do you want to know?"

"What your name is."

"It's Dake — Dake Cramley."

“Dake! That’s such a short, easy name. I shall call you Dakie. Mayn’t I?”

“Oh, yes, if you like it. Nobody ever called me that before.”

“Then, you see, it will be just my own name for you.”

Mrs. Bray now appeared on the scene. She looked at the pair with a smile which gave a new expression to her face.

“Such a time,” she said, “a-talkin’ and talkin’ about you and wonderin’ when you’d come. Well, we’ve spruced up consid’able, haven’t we?”

She sank down upon the lounge with the tired air which was partly fatigue, partly second nature with her.

“I’ve showed him my new frock and shoes,” piped up the infant. Then she added, “He says his name’s Dake, but he’s goin’ to be Dakie for me.”

“And what are you goin’ to be to him?” queried Mrs. Bray, to whom this day had brought more real satisfaction than any she had experienced for years.

“He hasn’t told me. Daise is all the name I’ve got now.”

“I don’t believe that,” responded the woman, with a little solemn, positive shake of her head. “Nobody need tell me the folks who had the right to name you in the beginnin’ didn’t give you somethin’ better than that. Try and think now! Didn’t you ever hear somethin’ longer?”

The child stared a few moments in a puzzled way at the woman. Then suddenly a change came over her face ; she slipped from Duke's knee ; she seemed to be gazing at something in the air. Then she stretched out her hands and cried in a voice which quivered with childish joy and eagerness, —

“Mamma ! Mamma !”

The two watched her breathlessly. It was no dream. They both instinctively felt that. Some scene, some event, far in the border-land of infantile memory, had, at Mrs. Bray's suggestion, started to life.

“She is calling — she is trying to tell me,” the eager voice went on, the gaze fixed on the air ; “Daise — Daisy — there is something else — Daisy Ross — that is what she is sayin' ; and she sits there a smilin' and a reachin' out her arms to me. O mamma, mamma !” She burst into passionate sobbing.

“You shall be our little Daisy Ross al'ays,” exclaimed Mrs. Bray as soon as she could speak ; and she bent over the child and held her with a real mother-yearning to her heart. Then she placed her in Duke's arms, recognizing his prior right.

In a little while the sobs ceased, though the small body still quivered with excitement.

“It is my truly name,” she whispered. “Shall I be your Daisy — Daisy Ross ?”

“Yes, always. It is the puttiest name in the

world;” and then, for the first time, he bent down and kissed the shining hair.

Then he started, stared about him, and blushed like a girl. Caresses, given or received, were something so entirely out of his experience! But Mrs. Bray had been summoned from the room before this happened.

That night, after Daisy was fast asleep, her two friends had a long talk. Dake opened it by proposing that Daisy should remain with Mrs. Bray. She acquiesced as a matter of course.

Then he suggested making some compensation, however slight, for her board. He had been revolving this matter in his mind all day. The advance in his salary had, of course, been continued after the tailor's bill had been settled. Dake offered this amount, with some trepidation for its slightness, to Mrs. Bray.

The woman had to count her sixpences carefully; but, in the present case, her heart would have its way. She insisted that all such a mite as Daisy could eat would not make an appreciable difference. She could sleep on the comfortable old lounge, and all other matters would take care of themselves.

But Dake persisted in bearing some share of the expenses; and seeing he would be better satisfied by this arrangement, Mrs. Bray consented.

There was another matter which required longer discussion. The two felt it important to gain pos-

session of any facts in Daisy's history which were now obtainable, but no step could be taken in that direction which involved any renewal of her relations with the North End.

On this point Dake and his landlady agreed absolutely. Both believed the few statements he had gleaned from the woman and the crowd at the time of the child's rescue. Dake had reasons for not wishing to enter those precincts again, but they were more for Daisy's sake than his own. It might possibly expose her to some peril, if the people from whom he had rescued her, or any of the crowd who had witnessed the scene, discovered where she was, and had a notion some capital might be made out of the knowledge.

It suddenly struck Dake that a policeman of the right sort would be the person best qualified to extract any possible information of Daisy's antecedents from the man and woman into whose hands she had fallen.

Dake had some acquaintance among the police force. He had once saved a member from a broken head in a street row where the boy found himself by accident. The man had never forgotten the service. Dake could depend on him for a good turn if it lay in his power.

Mrs. Bray, when Dake mentioned the policeman, heartily approved of securing his services. It was her suggestion that he should be brought to the

house, and have an interview with Daisy. She believed the sight of the child, with the marks of that cruel blow, would be an object lesson more effective than any words.

Mrs. Bray's heart was thoroughly enlisted now; but the whole affair had also the charm and mystery of romance to her feminine imagination and curiosity.

XX

RED BERRY ROADS AND AMOURY ROOST

TOM and Dorothy Draycott were having a week at Red Berry Roads in southern New Hampshire. You will not find the place on the map. All I can say is, if you once get there, anywhere from May to November, you will never want to go away.

John Amoury was a distant relative of Mrs. Draycott; but the close, affectionate intimacy between the two families had its roots in something deeper than any ties of kindred.

The Amourys had no children, and the young Draycotts were very dear to them. It was a tradition in both households that Tom and Dorothy should spend some part of the summer at the country home in New Hampshire.

"On this spot," John Amoury used to say, sitting in a corner of his piazza, "I must see the June in and the October out. I can't afford to scant either end of the show!" When he said this to his wife, it was with that smile, half playful, half tender, with which he was apt to regard her. He had one of those delightful personalities which drew all sorts of people to him — a generous-built, large-featured,

blond-haired and bearded man, not handsome, but with a face which would have been likely to strike you among a hundred, and, if you had come to know it, would have a power and a charm for the rest of your days.

He was a business man, successful on the Stock Exchange; but, like his closest friend, Donald Draycott, he might have been more so, had material possessions been the aim and end of his existence.

There was so much to love about the man! He, too, loved so many things, — books, scenery, art, and people of varied qualities and temperaments, with that generous, many-roomed heart of his. Then his wife — despite his decided personality, people could not talk long about John Amoury without coming to his wife — was one of the loveliest of women.

She was a rather small, delicate-featured, graceful-moulded brunette. The glory of her face was her eyes, with their soft, dark brilliancy. They would have made the homeliest face beautiful; but Mrs. Amoury's had fine details of cheek and chin and forehead.

Amoury Roost at Red Berry Roads was the sort of home, and a good deal more, you would have expected of such people. It was a house of large, solid, generous build, with deep piazzas and some picturesque window balconies. The color, a soft brownish-gray, was relieved against darker trimmings. The house fronted a spacious lawn, broken by winding paths

and blossoming thickets, and here and there a mound gay with flowers.

The interior of this wide-halled, large-roomed house corresponded with the outside. The quiet tone of the furnishings rested sense and soul alike.

The owner characteristically called the home which he had built in the heart of a large, ancient hill-and-dale farmstead, Amoury Roost. All around it, roads, green, fragrant, shadowy, wound and twisted, climbed and dipped, in the most picturesque fashion, affording delightful surprises in the way of landscapes near and remote.

The name of the land had been one of Mrs. Amoury's happy inspirations. These old, vine-tangled roadsides were gay with multiform red tints from the year's first blossoming to its fading. Wild strawberries, raspberries, ripening cherries, checkerberries, partridge-berries, bunch-berries, barberries, the clusters of mountain ash, each had their turn, each shot a more or less vivid crimson, scarlet, vermillion, among the varied greenery.

This had struck the mistress of Amoury Roost when she drove the first time over the newly purchased land.

"They should be rightfully called Red Berry Roads," she said to her husband one day when they were out together.

"And they shall be, Evelyn," he answered.

Mrs. Draycott used playfully to tell her cousin,

John Amoury, that the only “woman of whom she ever felt one throb of jealousy was his own wife!

Evelyn Amoury, in her turn, archly confided to Donald Draycott that she could not feel quite at ease if the woman of whom John was so fond were any other than Grace Draycott!

As a matter of course the young people were having the most delightful time possible. Their visit happened this year to coincide with that of some other guests of a different status.

“They had no children of their own,” John Amoury said, “therefore they must piece it out as they best could with other people’s.”

So every year they came for their Children’s Week to Red Berry Roads — “tow-headed lads and romping lasses,” as John Amoury called them — a round dozen, — the boys lodged in some comfortable rooms partitioned off in the stable-loft, where the coachman affirmed that he “slept with one eye open lest the rascally youngers should play some devil’s trick with the animals!”

The girls — they came like the boys, from the city alleys and slums — were relegated to the attic, where the small, sunny rooms seemed to them like palace-chambers, and where they could see the flickering of leaf-shadows, while the robins from nests in the boughs sang them wide awake in the midsummer mornings.

Then the long happy day was before them, when

they could roam at their own sweet will through green meadows and clover-scented lanes, and dim, soft-whispering pine-woods, to return at night a tired, merry, ravenous crowd, to sate their appetites at a board heaped with appetizing abundance.

These singular guests afforded infinite amusement and fresh interest to the young Draycotts, who were eager to lend a hand in their entertainment. "The dozen," as they were comprehensively designated at Amoury Roost, were largely left to themselves to take their happiness in their own way, amid the vast, green rooms whose doors the summer swung wide to them.

The third morning after her arrival, Dorothy found herself with some unusual leisure on her hands. Tom had gone to drive with his host. Mrs. Amoury was engaged with some household matters.

Dorothy had watched the dozen set off, wild with glee, for a picnic in the woods. The perfect morning, with its gold and azure, its dews still sparkling among the greenery, kept her out in the grounds. As she sauntered among the winding paths she caught sight, over the low stone wall, of Griff, who had just led Caliph out to water.

Caliph was Mr. Amoury's favorite horse, a large, splendid-built, thoroughbred roan.

Caliph knew Dorothy almost as well as he did his master. The fiery creature was docile to the touch of that little palm which had regaled him with sugar

and apples when he was a colt, and the giver a slip of a girl.

Those old, happy times rose vivid in Dorothy's memory. If she and Caliph could only start off now on one of their gallops together! She would choose the quiet roads she knew so well, where there was small chance of meeting anybody unless it might be some school children or farm-hand. In a flash Dorothy had mounted the coping of the low stone wall. She shouted at the top of her voice. The man turned sharply about, and trotted up to her.

"Griff," she began breathlessly, "I am just wild to mount Caliph and have one of our old scampers over the roads. I sha'n't be gone over an hour or two. You and I," patting the animal's nose, "are old friends, aren't we, Caliph? Now, Griff, be spry, please, and saddle him in a hurry, and bring him here and see what a mount I'll make from this stone-wall!"

Griffin was a Welshman with a short, stout figure, and a square, smooth-shaven, honest face.

His small eyes twinkled and his big mouth twisted and smiled, as he gazed at the young girl, who only yesterday it seemed, had pattered about the stable with him.

"Caliph's in fine trim," he said in his slow way, "and the mornin' was made for a smart canter. I'll saddle him and have him back in short order, Miss Dorothy."

She waited on the stone coping, her slender young figure drawn against the greenery of the thickets. She wore a shade hat, the wide brim caught up at one side, and some light, pearl-tinted stuff twisted about the crown. Her blouse was a pretty, simple affair in so faint a shade of yellow that it had almost the effect of cream-white. She wore a plain black silk skirt longer than those she usually chose for a walk. She did not have to wait long, perched on that low coping between blue sky and green earth. Griff soon appeared leading Caliph; and Dorothy, placing her hand on the man's shoulder, sprang lightly into the saddle.

"That was handsomely done, Miss Dorothy," commented Griff, putting the reins in her hand, and touching his cap.

"Thank you, Griff."

The world seemed to Dorothy Draycott a very happy place as she rode away into the summer morning.

Griff stood and watched the light, erect figure, the high-stepping roan, with a look of pleasure softening his rugged features.

"If she ain't a pieter, a sittin' on that big creetur,' to make a man's heart go pit-a-pat under his ribs, then I'll be shot!" he murmured to himself.

An hour later Dorothy drew rein on a lonely road which wound through a small stretch of thick pine woods. She had been racing Caliph over the old

country highways in a fashion that would have made people stare, thinking she was risking her neck on that big, fiery beast. But she had not met a solitary person when she entered the cool shadows, the odorous scent of the pines.

Dorothy drew a long breath, removed her hat, and half her hair, loosened by the rapid motion, tumbled to her waist. The sunshine, striking through green rafters overhead, touched the hair with rich, coppery gleams, which made a glory about the young, joyous face.

Dorothy's eyes glanced large and bright into the cool dusk of the woods. Then she dropped the reins, patted Caliph's glossy, damp neck, and said in her clear-cadenced young voice, —

“You have done splendidly, Caliph. It was just grand — the way you tore over those old roads with not a soul to see! That was the best of all. You ought to go home wearing a wreath for the morning's race; but if you don't, we shall have our secret all the same, and return in triumph.”

She deftly gathered up the fallen hair and fastened it with her large shell-pin, glanced with her radiant eyes and swift-motivated head all about the wood, replaced her hat, resumed her reins, and cantered off. She had been there five minutes perhaps.

Somebody had seen her — of all things! — in that silent, shadowy, odorous stretch of pines.

A young man, stretched full length a short dis-

tance from the road, had been suddenly roused from his nap by the thud of horses' feet. He had not stirred when Caliph and his rider burst in sight. They passed close to him; but he was hidden in the shade of the boles, while the sunshine, sifting through the pine boughs, made a soft illumination about the group. It lent a glory to Dorothy's head; and the whole effect, against the green dusk, was that of some vision of unearthly loveliness.

The stranger whom Dorothy had startled from his greenwood slumbers was stopping at a summer hostelry three miles away. He had arrived only the night before; he was awaiting some friends who were to join him on their return from the White Mountains. At breakfast he had learned there were brook-trout in the hill streams, and had started out with fishing-rod and basket. On his way back to the hostelry, after several hours and tolerable success among the streams, he had struck across some lots which brought him out on the road, close to the pines. The shade and coolness were irresistible after his exercise. He dropped his trout basket on the pine needles, stretched himself at full length, and listened to the winds dreaming among the boughs. At last he fell asleep.

All the circumstances of Dorothy's appearance tended to enhance its romance and mystery to a young, sensitive imagination.

The fragrant silence of the old pine woods, the

brown needles flecked with sunshine, the handsome, thoroughbred roan, and then, the crown and glory of all, the tall, graceful girl herself, in that simple, unconventional guise, with the beautiful head, the great radiant eyes, and that dark, gold-burnished hair—all deepened the spell, the poetry, the witchery, of those five minutes, so unlike any other five minutes of his life.

"Had she stepped," he asked himself, "out of poem or rare old picture, or was she the vision of a dream which had lingered and lit up with its radiance that wonderland betwixt sleeping and waking?"

At all events, the sight had so fascinated his imagination that it seemed to him he was ready to turn knight-errant, and go wandering around the world for another glimpse of the vision. You must remember he was very young, and might live to smile at all this; but if he were the right sort of man, reverent and tender for the dreams and ideals of his youth, the smile would never become a sneer.

At last he rose, took up his fishing-tackle and set out for the hostelry. In certain moods the muse was kindly to him. As he sauntered along the midsummer roads some couplets sang themselves into the sweet tumult of heart and brain. When he reached his room he wrote down the rhymes.

XXI

AN OBJECT LESSON IN ALTRUISM

"Siste Viator!"

The young man who heard those words came to a dead stop and stared about him. He had been walking rapidly along the green old highway through the wild-bloom scented summer dusk.

The words, syllabled distinct and rather peremptory on the stillness, seemed to fill all the air about him. At last he spoke in a raised, decided key.

"I don't know whether you are man or ghost, but the voice is the voice of my old classmate, Tom Draycott!"

There was a rustle behind the laburnums, and the individual last named vaulted over the stone wall.

An explosive greeting followed. The young masculines did not, as girls would have done, lavish embraces on each other, but they shouted, laughed, and wrung hands until it seemed each right arm must ache from its shoulder blade. Then they squared off, doubled their fists, and made feints of deadly assault. In short, though they were tall, sinewy young fellows, both evinced by their present actions they had not left their boyhood far behind them.

After this ebullition of youth and high spirits had its way, Tom laid his hand on the other's shoulder.

“This is the hugest surprise of vacation!” he exclaimed. “Did you spring full armed from the ground?”

“Not quite! I have been staying at the hotel over at Cedar Rocks, waiting the arrival of some friends from the North who are to join me there. And now, if you value your life a pin's fee, explain promptly how you yourself came to be in this place, and turn up in this most unexpected fashion?”

Tom subjoined a rapid statement of the circumstances which had brought him and his sister to Red Berry Roads soon after Class Day.

“What a Paradise it is!” commented Tom's friend, gazing around him at the grand sweep of lawn, and getting through some tall larches a glimpse of the Amoury Roost chimneys.

“It is all that! I am prodigiously glad you turned up, old boy.”

Tom linked his arm in his companion's, and they proceeded up the road, absorbed in their talk.

Tom was not long in making up his mind that he would present his friend at Amoury Roost. But when he at last proposed this, the other, sensitive about intruding, demurred a good deal. Tom's insistence, however, carried the point. He had a secret intention that his friend should remain over night; but all that he could leave to the Amourys.

Half an hour after the introduction had taken place, and host and hostess had insisted on Tom's friend remaining to dinner, in a way which set his acquiescence in the light of a personal favor to themselves, Mrs. Amoury, meeting her husband in the hall, said to him, "Did you notice, John?"

"Notice what, Evelyn?" There was a humorous twinkle in his eye.

"Of course you know what I mean. The stunned look of that young man when Dorothy entered, and Tom presented his friend. Had she glided a risen ghost upon the scene, he could not have been more utterly dazed. Of course he recovered himself and went through his part, *de rigueur*; but for a quarter of a minute he was the most amazed creature in the universe."

Amoury laughed his manly, hearty laugh.

"You might have knocked down my young man with a feather for an instant or two. But I had some sympathy for him. I remember when I saw you, my dear, for the first time, I was all struck of a heap. A man doesn't forget that kind of experience."

"It was twenty years ago. You and I are such old lovers, John!"

She said it with a kind of amused tenderness. Something of all the gladness of those twenty years was in the wife's voice.

"Are we really?" His eyes and his tone, as he

regarded the sweet-faced woman, seemed to deny her words. “You don’t look a day older to me, Evelyn, than you did at that time. Perhaps you would to other men.”

Mrs. Amoury lifted her delicate eyebrows.

“Probably! But it is unimportant, if true.” Then, with a sudden change of tone she asked, “Do you think Tom noticed?”

“I presume not. He is used to Dorothy; he couldn’t imagine her having so startling an effect on another fellow.”

“But Dorothy,—bless the child!” continued Mrs. Amoury, “behaved perfectly. She had no idea of the sensation she had made. That was owing, I think, to her own surprise. Nothing could have been simpler, nothing better calculated to relieve the strain of the situation, than the way in which she said: “I feel as though we must be already acquainted, I have heard Tom speak of you so often.”

“Yes; that was prettily done. He seems a fine fellow too. But what do you imagine Donald and Grace would have thought, Evelyn?”

“That is another question.” Mrs. Amoury’s tone and look grew grave. “This thing had a curious effect on me, as though the child had suddenly sprung into a woman. Yet she is only seventeen, John.”

At this instant there was a burst of vociferous children’s voices outside with shrieks and yells of laughter.

"There they come!" exclaimed John Amoury, "tow-headed boys and tomboy girls! They have been to see the cows milked. They wouldn't forego that fun to-night after all their day's rollicking. I trust the rations are sufficient to feed a small army, Evelyn."

"I am sure that the supplies must be equal to any possible demand. And then one likes to think how that ravenous little crew will sleep to-night."

"And we shall likewise, I imagine!" and he laughed.

"Yes; I know, John. Of course one can't help others, without taking more or less trouble one's self. But I never feel quite so content when I lie down at night under our summer-roof, as I do when I remember those half dozen young Arabs snoring in the stable-loft, and the other half dozen curled up after their day's racing and screeching, asleep in the attics. Despite all drawbacks, I think our Children's Week is the happiest of all our summer weeks at Red Berry Roads."

John Amoury lifted his eyebrows. "It's lucky for the kids you feel like that!" he said.

XXII

SOME YOUNG ROMANCE

MEANWHILE, in the drawing-room at Amoury Roost, three young people were having a happy time — with a difference.

Of course you have discovered, my reader, the identity of the young man whom Dorothy had surprised in the pine woods with Tom's classmate, Philip Fallowes.

In the course of his life, which had not yet reached its twentieth birthday, he had never experienced so stupendous a surprise as when Dorothy Draycott walked into the room. A moment later he discovered that the lady of the pines and the poem was young Draycott's sister.

Young Fallowes soon regained his self-control, and was equal to his part in the talk which ensued. It was fortunate for Dorothy that her absolute ignorance placed her perfectly at her ease. The conversation soon waxed gay on all sides. Merry peals of laughter filled the drawing-room. Young Fallowes, who could not at once divest himself of the feeling with which he had regarded Dorothy as something remote and sacred, thought it would be a

relief to box Tom's ears for the familiar way in which he joked and quizzed his sister, as though she were some ordinary mortal; but he soon discovered that young woman could hold her own at repartee and often put Tom on his mettle.

In a little while Mr. and Mrs. Amoury joined the group. The talk naturally turned on the great event of the day — the children's picnic. This had taken place in a deep, romantic ravine, whose rocky walls were hung with wild shrubs, saplings, and tangled vines. At the foot a shallow stream kept up a happy, murmurous ditty, as its soft, cool, feet slipped and twinkled over the stones, the mosses, and the ferns.

Mr. and Mrs. Amoury, as well as their young guests, had joined the picnic; and the children from the stifling streets and alleys had gone wild as unbroken colts with the freedom and frolic of the hour. All sorts of things had happened at this picnic, some quaint, others pathetic to more experienced minds, and others ineffably ludicrous. These were all lived over again in the drawing-room, or at the dinner which followed after the dozen had their supper, and had gone to bed to dream of a blissful to-morrow.

When dinner was over they all repaired to the drawing-room. Mr. Amoury had to excuse himself for the business man's inevitable letters which must be ready for the morning mail. The others went out on the veranda, and walked in the moonlight in which the midsummer evening lay transfigured.

Tom walked with Mrs. Amoury, and Philip Fallowes with Dorothy. The girl wore a white dress that night. There was some soft lace at her throat and sleeves.

Next to his mother, Tom admired Mrs. Amoury more than any woman in the world. She had a quality of good comradeship, which in a woman is so attractive to a very young man. When he talked about his college life she entered into it with unfailing interest and sympathy, and was never tired of hearing about club-affairs, foot-ball games, and rowing matches. Tom was but dimly aware how often, amid the bright talk and laughter, she touched the deeper chords and awakened the finer responses of his nature.

He soon plunged into Harvard affairs, which made his world now, and entertained Mrs. Amoury with various events of Class Day that interested and amused her. Tom did not perceive how a wistful glance stole occasionally to his sister. How tall and fair the girl looked as she moved along by her companion's side, her white dress gleaming in the moonlight! Mrs. Amoury had known Dorothy from her infancy. To-night she seemed suddenly to have shot up into womanhood.

Mrs. Amoury could not at once reconcile her thoughts to this transition. She wondered if it had struck Tom; she threw out a tentative remark.

"Dorothy is springing up into a woman; she is going to be a beautiful one, Tom."

"I suppose likely. She is her mother's daughter, you know. But when it comes to the beauty, I confess I hadn't thought much about that."

"'Hadn't thought much about that!'" Mrs. Amoury mentally echoed his remark. "Nor you haven't thought your classmate—a fine fellow, I confess—is thoroughly enamoured, though it is all going on before your eyes! What fatuous creatures you youngsters are, and you fancy you carry the world before you!"

But the sweet woman was wise and held her tongue.

Meanwhile the pair in advance were having their talk too.

We have seen how young Fallowes's first sight of Dorothy, with all the romantic setting of the hour and place, had entranced his imagination, and given her an ideal sacredness and remoteness in his thought. It took a little while for him to adjust his ideas and feelings to the change. But he began to think that this fair, blooming girl by his side was better than the lady of his poem, whose face was to shine upon him, afar and lonely, in the exalted moments and great crises of his life.

Dorothy Draycott had reached that borderland where girlhood and womanhood meet. The quality of one or the other was in all her thought and feeling, her mood and speech. She was something altogether fresh and charming to the young man, and he

listened to what she said as a worshipper long ago might have listened to the sibyl's oracles.

It had been easy and natural in-doors to talk of the events of the hour, to wax merry over the speeches, the ideas, and the manners of the wild little crowd let loose in the woods that day; but out here under the inviolate stars, in that white, radiant stillness, the talk, light and gay as youth and gladness at first, took a graver key.

"Was there ever such a wonderful night as this, do you think, Mr. Fallowes?" said Dorothy, looking up suddenly in his face after a little pause, in which her gaze and her thoughts had gone away from her companion into the shining about her.

He smiled down from his taller height on the girl, tall and slender too, who had spoken to him out of her frank impulse much as a child might have done.

"I am inclined to doubt it, Miss Draycott," he answered. "It seems as though this must be nature's masterpiece in the way of nights—not to be equalled by all which have gone before or may come after."

"Oh, I see! You are quizzing me, Mr. Fallowes," with that sudden accession of dignity which was only half conscious, and to which her blossoming years lent a peculiar charm. "Of course you must have wonderful nights out there in Colorado among your Rocky Mountains. I hear they make all our landscapes on this coast seem small and cramped. I should think living amongst such grand scenery must make the people grander and nobler too!"

"I am not at all sure of that, Miss Draycott. You know what Carlyle says about people's only seeing what they bring eyes for?"

"Oh, yes; I have heard papa quote that often. It must be true, too. Take Mr. and Mrs. Amoury, for instance. It would make no difference where they lived,—they would be just the same."

"I am sure of that," answered young Fallowes enthusiastically. "What a generous, noble thing they are doing now! It is almost unexampled—opening their home to such a crowd of young savages, and devoting their time and thought to them, day after day. It is splendid!"

"It makes other people feel small, though," continued Dorothy, as probably she would not, had the mystical moonshine about her been the matter-of-fact daylight. "I often said to myself, when we were having our frolic in the woods, 'Dorothy Draycott, what have *you* ever done to make people happier or better with all your seventeen years? You may think you never had a chance; but, if one came,—some great moment, some grand test,—are you the least sure you would meet the call bravely, promptly?'"

"I should think the best answer to that question was the fact one first thought to ask it," answered young Fallowes.

At that moment Mrs. Amoury came up. The lady proposed they should see a new picture just hung in the drawing-room alcove.

Perhaps she thought it rather dangerous to be romancing out there in the moonlight.

At any rate, she kissed Dorothy that night with a peculiar tenderness before they separated.

"My dear, I have been thinking of your mother," she said.

XXIII

DEAR DOROTHY DRAYCOTT

PHILIP FALLOWES, who had made a very favorable impression on his host and hostess, yielded to their solicitations, and passed the night at Amoury Roost. In the morning he and Draycott vaulted into the saddles for a ride, the latter promising to show his companion "some glorious samples of New England landscape, if they weren't cut out on the vast lines of his Western scenery."

As they were starting off, a telegram was brought to young Fallowes. It was forwarded from the hotel; his friends would arrive on the following day.

The dozen set out that morning for a wild, rocky pasture — a favorite resort of theirs — two miles away. Mrs. Amoury and Dorothy watched their departure from the side piazza. The loud mirth with which the childish crowd overflowed, the shouts, the rollicking glee, struck responsive chords in Dorothy's nature. After they had disappeared, she suddenly proposed to join the youngsters. Mrs. Amoury demurred a little. There was the distance, and not a horse that morning in the stalls. Dorothy

made light of the walk, snatched her shade-hat and gloves, and started off.

She overtook the dozen a quarter of a mile, perhaps, from the pasture. They were clamorous over an aggregation to their numbers, in the shape of a small urchin of two years, big-freckled, blunt-nosed, with a mat of sunburned, straw-colored hair, and short fat legs which made his locomotion an irregular and painful effort.

He had been discovered seated on a side-road in a wheelbarrow before a small story-and-a-half farmhouse; and the dozen, with yells of delight, had pounced upon the wheelbarrow and its occupant, and bore off the double prize. The father, a tall, round-shouldered man with a thick, hay-colored beard, had come to the fence, and evidently enjoyed the sport as he saw the child borne away, crowing with delight, while one and another eagerly took turns at the wheelbarrow.

Dorothy, as we have seen, came upon the group a little while before the rendezvous was reached. She was by this time a favorite with the boys and girls, and her appearance was greeted with riotous hullos, and frequent somersaults.

They entered the upland pasture, a wide, picturesque spot with green hollows and hillocks, gay with the midsummer's wildflowering. Mosses made soft, cushioned places at the feet of gray boulders, up whose lichened sides the children scampered like

squirrels. Indeed, the whole breezy, sunny upland seemed one of nature's vast playrooms, opened wide and furnished for precisely the sort of small, untamed humanity which now uproariously took possession of it. The wild nature, the children's mirth, the freedom and frolic of the hour, infected Dorothy. At seventeen a girl is not always a woman. Her childhood is certain to assert itself in multiform ways and surprises. Dorothy entered heart and soul into the spirit of the scene. She laughed and raced and shouted with the others. The nascent womanhood had abdicated for the moment. Yet all this time the fair, tall, slender girl was a softening, refining influence on that noisy crew of juveniles.

A huge pine bole lay prone in one corner of the pasture. Not far away was a long, smooth plank. The children were not slow in utilizing this discovery. The board was balanced on the bole, and with howls and shrieks of delight the teetering followed. Dorothy took her turn at the plank. How delightful the motion was! It made her think of the time when she and Tom used to play they were gypsies. For the hour she was the little girl she remembered.

"I tell you this is all high jinks!" said one of the boys in a hoarse whisper to his companion.

"What a brick she is!" rejoined another.

Dorothy caught both speeches. She caught something else a moment later. It was a shriek of terror from two or three children in front of her. The next

instant a thunder of hoofs broke upon her ear. She glanced up the road; she saw a horse, a huge, gray creature, with broken harness clinging to his flanks, tearing along the highway.

It was an appalling sight! That blind, brute force suddenly let loose was certain to bear down and trample out the life of anything which came in its way. Dorothy shuddered, and with some curious instinct her gaze turned to the road in front of the pasture. The horse was making for that. Then she saw!

In the middle of the sandy highway squatted the urchin who had made a triumphal progress in his wheelbarrow that morning. While the teetering was going on he had managed to roll his little dumpling shaped body down the pasture-bank, and crawl unobserved into the road.

Several hooks which fastened his gingham apron behind had given way, and his little, round, plump, patient back was fully exposed to the scorching sun; but he remained totally oblivious of his blistering cuticle, as he did of the danger that was sweeping upon him; he sat there tossing handfuls of hot sand, and crowing to himself in a seventh heaven of childish bliss.

In one flashing instant every detail of the scene was burned into Dorothy's consciousness. With one agonized cry she leaped from the board; she rushed to the bank; she darted into the road. The children

stood still with open mouths and riveted eyes. The great, swift-plunging bulk was close at hand now. She leaned forward; she grasped the boy and swept him back. Then the shadow fell upon both — fell and passed by! The horse came so close that his great flank grazed the child's dangling foot, while the hot breath poured into both faces, and drops of white spume flecked the round bullet head. It was all over in a breath.

Dorothy staggered to the bank with her burden. Strained and excited, she hugged the child devouringly one moment, and shook him until he was dizzy the next. This treatment, added to the appearance of the horse, which had come and passed like some horrible nightmare, scared the infant out of its wits; he tried to wriggle out of Dorothy's arms, but she held him with an iron clutch; he opened his mouth, and yelled at the top of his lungs.

A few moments before two young horsemen had spurred their animals up a slight hillock. They drew their reins to breathe their horses, and look over the landscape. The young men had been having a glorious canter of several hours amongst the lovely scenery of the region. Their talk had been full of the experiences of two years of college life. This would have afforded the pair an unfailing topic for the summer vacation. One ludicrous incident after another had been lived over with infinite jest and roars of laughter. At last there was a little

pause. When one of the young men spoke again it was in a graver mood.

"To think you and I, Fallowes, are actually Juniors! It makes one feel venerable."

"Yes. It's surprising what a long stride that seems to a Harvard man from the Sophs he has just left behind."

"I know. It makes a fellow pull a sober face to remember he's half through his college course. We shall be old grads in two years!"

"It seems incredible, Draycott. I say, we've no time to waste now. We must pluck up energy and stick to the grind, and let the nonsense slide."

"That is true, Fallowes. Dear old Alma Mater! She has a right to expect her sons will honor her. We shall be glad when it is all over and we get our degrees, that we didn't shirk the work, and held to the manly side of things. It will be an awful pull, though, sometimes!"

There was a flash in the other's dark eyes. "But we won't flinch, Draycott, because of the pull. There's my hand on it!"

That clasping of hands meant something almost in the nature of a solemn compact. The two young, happy, fortunate classmates knew the temptations and allurements of college life and the moral energy and definite purpose they would need to close their ears and brace their souls when the sirens sang sweetly.

The hillock on which the young men had paused commanded a wide area of country, which included the rocky pasture and the children at play there.

After the brief pause which followed their late conversation, Tom Draycott exclaimed suddenly to his companion, —

“Do you see that tall girl teetering on that log in the pasture on the right? She seems in for a bang-up good time with that small crowd about her. She looks a good deal like Dorothy.” He riveted his sharp eyes upon the figure. “Fallowes, it is Dorothy!”

The young men burst into a roar of laughter. It subsided suddenly. They saw the girl leap from the plank, and dart across the pasture. Then she disappeared down the bank. The riders could not perceive from their point of view the child squatting in the road; but they did see the commotion in the pasture, the small crowd rushing forward, the interest evidently riveted on one spot. Then they caught sight of the frightened, plunging beast. They turned white as sheets; they spurred their horses down the hillock. Each felt in a flash that his utmost speed could be of no avail. Whatever peril Dorothy had faced, it must have come and passed before they could reach her. When they gained a point which commanded a long perspective of bare, hot, sandy road, young Draycott turned his head.

“Fallowes,” he said in a sharp voice, “I can’t look! For God’s sake, tell me if anything has happened to her.”

"She stands in the middle of the road. There's a child in her arms. O Draycott, what splendid nerve! She must have gone to save him."

While he spoke they could hear the hoofs thundering on the lower fork of the road into which the maddened beast had turned.

Dorothy, sitting by the roadside with the silent, awed group clustered about her, suddenly heard a shout. They all turned and saw the riders a little distance off.

The young men removed their hats, and made the welkin ring with their shouts. This ebullition was a relief to their excited feelings.

A moment later the pair rode up. Tom was off his horse in a moment. Fallowes, though he had a strong impulse to follow, remained in the saddle with a feeling that his closer presence might be an intrusion.

"What have you been doing, Dorothy?" asked her brother in a tone half of reproach, half of complex emotions.

She sat in the road, white and shaken.

"I couldn't help it, Tom," she said in an excited, appealing voice. She pointed to the child. "I was all there was to save him. Oh, don't scold me now!" Her lips trembled.

Tom strode over to his friend. "Ride back like Jehu, Fallowes, and send Griff on with the carriage. We must get her away from this."

XXIV

THE DAYS OF THY YOUTH

THREE hours later, Dorothy sat at the lunch-table. Of course the Amourys had learned the events of the morning from the young men.

Dorothy had been persuaded to lie down as soon as she reached her chamber. She had a long crying-fit, while Mrs. Amoury hovered over her with soothing words and caresses. At last she sank into a sound sleep — the best possible restorative for her shaken nerves.

“You all look at me as though I had done some grand thing,” she burst out at the table in passionate disclaimer. “It was nothing of the kind. I don’t deserve the least praise. I never once thought of the danger or of what I was doing. If I had, or had glanced at the horse, I couldn’t have moved a step. But there was the child, and I only thought of him, and that he must be saved; so I rushed out and grabbed him. That is all there is of it!”

“Well, my dear,” replied John Amoury, who was sitting next his young guest, “we have made a mistake; I will revoke all orders for the garlands with which we intended to crown you.” Then he went

on to relieve the strain of the situation by setting the events in a practical, everyday light. “It appears that some men were blasting for a well. The owner of the horse left him, with incredible stupidity, as he was always restive at strange noises, in close proximity to the explosions. The man had, for his pains, a smashed carriage, and a valuable horse more or less spoiled.”

That night young Fallowes and Dorothy sat together on a corner of the piazza.

“It is his last night. We must give them this much grace,” Mrs. Amoury said to her husband. She had a woman’s secret sympathy with a little young romance.

It seemed as though all nature had gone to sleep. Not a breath of wind stirred in bough or grass; not a star shone through the veil of soft, gleaming gray which had been drawn over the sky. The moon rode like a golden bark, dim and remote on far gray seas.

Dorothy wore to-night a dress of some soft, light wool in a delicate rose shade. Young Fallowes thought he should always remember her in that dress; but he had thought precisely the same thing when she walked with him the night before in her white gown.

“I envy you very much, Mr. Fallowes,” she said in her impulsive way. “In two or three days more you will see your Rocky Mountains. How that thought must — interest you!”

At that particular moment the most interesting point of space young Fallowes could conceive of was the one occupied by a beautiful, dark-haired, girlish head. His reply, however, went wide of the mark.

"You talk of envying me, Miss Draycott. I have found the best of reasons for envying your brother ever since I came here."

"For what, I wonder."

"Because he has a sister — do let me add — *such* a sister!"

Dorothy lifted her eyebrows, her laugh rippled gayly on the air.

"I am not certain Tom would regard that so much a cause for envy as you seem to imagine. It is dreadful — the way we tease and aggravate each other sometimes!"

"I should think the teasing and all that sort of thing must be delightfully enjoyable."

Dorothy thought Mr. Fallowes had a way of saying very nice things. She was a girl; of course she enjoyed them.

A little later the talk took a somewhat graver key.

"Do you remember what you said last night when we were walking together, Miss Draycott?"

"Not in the least. Something very sensible, I hope."

"That you wondered how you should meet the challenge of some perilous moment, some great, sudden demand."

“Oh, yes ; I remember now.”

“I thought of your remark this morning, and how you had answered your own doubt.”

“Oh, but that was not a real answer, Mr. Fallowes. I acted simply on a blind impulse.”

“People’s impulses must have some root in their characters. How every sound bone in that little cub’s body must be thanking you to-night !”

“I did snatch him away at the critical moment ; I do like to remember that.”

Through the gray darkness her eyes smiled radiant upon him.

The place, the time, encouraged her to pursue the subject in a way, which, again, the daylight might, perhaps, not have permitted.

“But the really grand acts, Mr. Fallowes, must be those which are done after one has thought about them—looked at them in every light, and knows just what is to be given up before one begins.”

“Won’t you give me an illustration, please ?”

“Well, there are the University Settlements, you know. What young, lovely, refined women go into those, and live among the slums, and work among the poor and friendless ! Then, there are those other girls, of a different kind, I know”—she paused suddenly as though with a second thought.

“Oh, do go on, please !”

“I know you will laugh at me—at least in your thought.”

“I promise, on my honor, Miss Draycott.”

“Who go into the Salvation Army. Of course I never could do that, even if the choice lay wholly with me—I am not good enough. I could never bring myself to wear those bonnets, or tramp the streets to the beat of a drum; but I can honor the goodness that lives for others, that never thinks or cares for one’s self.” And again her brown eyes flashed radiant through the dim, moonlit gray.

Philip thought of the poem lying in his drawer. The girl walking beside him was, after all, more and better than the lady of his dreams. An impulse almost overmastered him to tell her of that scene in the pine woods; but something in the girl herself, in her transparent ingenuousness, restrained him. He did, however, approach perilously near the subject he had mentally tabooed when he said half an hour later, and after the conversation had taken a lighter tone:—

“I am beginning to like your New England better than my own vast, incomplete West. I find it really hard, at the last moment, to tear myself away.”

“But you will be coming back in a little while, Mr. Fallows. How glad, too, Tom will be to see you!”

“I should like to know Tom’s sister will be a little glad also.”

Dorothy thought this another of his nice speeches. She replied graciously,—

“Of course I shall be, Mr. Fallows, if I am at

home. But that will be only in vacations and holidays now, for the most part. It is settled I am to go to Smith College for the next three years."

This was not altogether gratifying news to young Fallowes. Before he could reply, however, Dorothy continued, with a little matronly air which would not have misbecome his grandmother, —

"But I am heartily glad you and Tom care so much for each other. Of course, you will understand, Mr. Fallowes, I must be anxious about his associates at Harvard."

"Certainly, Miss Draycott."

His tone was deference itself.

"And I have heard things," continued Dorothy confidentially, "which satisfy me that some of his classmates are not — all they should be."

"No doubt that is true, Miss Draycott. We can only hope time may improve them."

Despite the gravity of his manner, he smothered a laugh, and he was saying to himself, —

"What a bewitching little goose she is!" and for a moment the tall girl seemed to him the child which one side of her certainly was.

At this point Tom, who had been detained by Mrs. Amoury, came out and joined them.

An hour later the young men drove over to Cedar Rocks. The time was consumed in making plans for the next college year. As they wrung each other's hands at parting, Fallowes said, —

“Take care of that young sister of yours, Draycott. She is a girl in a million!”

“The best girl in the world! I shall look out for Dollikins,” answered Tom jauntily. He fancied his friend was alluding to the affair of the morning.

He found Dorothy with Mrs. Amoury, to whom she had been confiding that she thought “young Fallowes the most splendid fellow in the world; and she was delighted that he and Tom,” this with the little matronly air sure to set the latter’s teeth on edge, “were so chummy.”

Mrs. Amoury knew girls. The frank praise, the high-colored adjectives, satisfied her that Dorothy’s young heart was quite safe.

The next day the children returned to the city. The parting always proved a painful experience to Mrs. Amoury. The small people could not have been under her roof, their comfort and happiness in a large sense uppermost in her thoughts and care, without awakening her warm interest and sympathy. Beneath the surface of awkward manners, unpolished speech, and untrained minds, she found the eager soul, the nascent conscience, the half-wakened heart, which made her always alive to their common humanity.

“I feel, now the time has come for them to go, we have no right to send them off,” she said to her husband, half jestingly, half in earnest. “It appears a good deal like giving them a taste of heaven and

then shutting them out. It seems as though they must have a sense of injustice rankling in their dumb, resentful little souls, as if they must be asking, ‘What right have you to stay here in the midst of all this beauty and ease and luxury, and send us back to the old life, the dark alleys, the noisome slums?’ The contrasts hurt me.”

“Of course they do, or you wouldn’t be the woman you are, my Evelyn. But despite all these things, it will be a happy, noisy little crowd of savages I shall convoy to the station this morning. I sha’n’t be able to feel, when I look at them, that any such thought is astir in the brain of one of those youngsters. At all events, I am absolutely sure they will carry away—every mother’s son and daughter—some new experience, some fresh health and happiness, and all be prodigiously glad they came. What a rousing cheer I should get if I put the question to them on the way down!”

Mrs. Amoury’s eyes brightened.

“There is something in that, John. Then, it is a comfort to know each boy will go away with a brand-new suit on his back, and each girl with a pretty hat and gown.”

“Yes; and a bigger comfort is that you and I, my dear, don’t have to run God’s world!”

He started for the wagon into which the dozen were already piling for their drive to the station.

XXV

A FRESH PROBLEM

Two days after the children left, the young Draycotts returned home.

The next morning Tom ran into the warehouse, learned Cramley was out, and left a line he had scribbled which appointed a meeting for that same evening.

During the week at Red Berry Roads, Dake had been very much in Tom's thoughts. The atmosphere of the place was calculated to stimulate altruistic sentiments; but more than this, Tom's heart was the largest factor in his interest. He was conscious of this fact, and sometimes half irritated over it. He wished that he could, for the time at least, put Dake Cramley's affairs out of his mind. But they were coming up to perplex him at all inconvenient seasons. He found the problem, too, which he had set himself to solve, more difficult than he had imagined. Yet there it was, insistent, implacable. All sorts of projects for Dake's future presented themselves in one shape or another, to be dismissed with inward scorn after a little reflection, as lacking in the first element of common sense.

One day it occurred to Tom that Red Berry Roads was just the sort of place for Dake at this time. He remembered, too, that with all the boy's repugnance to the close confinement, the ordered life, the monotonous toil of the warehouse, there had been no hankering after the old ways, the low neighborhood, the rude companionships, of the past. Every thing he had so wildly hankered for had been pure and sweet and wholesome.

The idea of Dake's coming to Red Berry Roads had no sooner presented itself to young Draycott, than in furtherance of his plan he sought an interview with Griffith, learned from him "there was a family in the neighborhood who might be prevailed on to take a fellow in, if he were of the right sort, didn't put on airs, and would be contented with plain, wholesome farmer's fare, and be off most of his time in the woods and fields."

Tom actually went to the farm, a pleasant, orchard-shaded place on a side road about two miles from the Amourys, and had an interview with the wife. The quiet, gabled-roofed old home — the kindly, simple-mannered, elderly woman — made a favorable impression on the young man. Of course everything must, in the last resort, depend on the way the thing would strike Dake; but Tom had little doubt of his decision.

If this last plan failed, Tom resolved to throw all scruples to the winds, and take John Amoury into

his confidence. The same reasons which had prevented his mentioning Dake Cramley at Red Knolls had been potent with him at Amoury Roost.

The well-known figure sprang up from the line of benches and came toward young Draycott as he turned once more into the mall. The young men greeted each other in the old hearty fashion, and then instinctively faced about for the sidewalk. Tom bent a rapid, penetrating glance on Dake. They resumed their old stride. Then Tom spoke.

"Dake, how have things been going with you?"

"They've been goin' putty lively."

Dake was struggling now with one of those sudden accesses of shyness with which Tom was so familiar.

"You don't look as though it had been such a pull as — as I feared you would find it."

"No; at least some of it wasn't."

It had been a sultry day again. Little vagrant winds which fluttered the leaves were grateful in the deepening dusk.

After a little while Tom spoke again, with a decided, yet interrogative tone.

"Dake, something has happened?"

"Yes, Draycott, there has."

"Don't you want me to know?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, what's the use of hanging fire, old fellow?"

"It's a good deal of a story."

Dake looked rather helplessly at his companion.

Tom came to his aid.

"Is it about yourself, or somebody else?"

"It's more about a girl than anybody else."

"A girl!" Tom stood still, and looked Dake in the eyes.

"Yes; she's jest a kid. Don't look as though she could be more than four years old."

"Oh!" said Tom, and they resumed their walk.

"Where did you come across her?"

This question proved the entering wedge.

Dake began with the old misery which came back two or three days after Tom went away. He painted it with a few terse sentences; and then he went on to relate how he had strayed off one night, so deep in his own wretchedness that he did not mind where he was going. When he discovered that he was among his old haunts at the North End, he turned about sharply.

"Of course you did," Tom commented decidedly.

Dake, fairly started now, did not notice the interruption. In a little while the young men's rapid stride had slowed. Tom was drinking in every syllable which fell from Dake's lips. He related in short, graphic sentences the scene at the corner of the North End alley. The two figures—hunted child—blear-eyed pursuer—stood sharp-drawn, one against the other, in his swift verbal picture.

Tom saw; his young blood was fired.

"I wish I had been there, Dake; I'd have gone in with you to give that old hulks a cudgelling!"

"It was lucky the crowd was on my side to a man and woman," continued Dake.

After this, he had all the talking to himself. The drama took less time in the relating than it does to write it here; but it included everything — the hurrying away from the threatening crowd, with the little quivering waif in his arms, the supreme question what to do with her, the pause and rapid decision at the corner of Hanover Street, and the scene, a little later, in the small back-room of his boarding-house.

"And where is she now?" questioned Tom eagerly.

"She's at the house still. She won't be anywhere else soon, I reckon."

Once started on this subject, Dake did not know when to stop. He related the manner in which they learned the child's name was Daisy Ross, and his voice grew husky in the recital; he dilated on the child's appearance, on her big eyes with just that wild-gentian-blue he had found sometimes among the marshes when he was tramping the autumn woods, on the shining gold of the hair, on the little head that was always astir like a robin's. He said the welt on the forehead had almost disappeared, and would leave no scar.

He told him Daisy would sit on his knee with her sweet, quaint prattle, and how, "every night, she was

at the door or window watching for him, and then what a time there would be, clapping of hands and peals of laughter, and such merry little romps as they had together!"

While they talked, the young men had gone with their rapid strides far out on Beacon Street, and at last found themselves in Brookline, near the reservoir. The lights of the great city shining through the summer night seemed a long way off.

When they turned to retrace their steps, a little silence fell. Tom was at his wit's end for a reply. This new interest of Dake's was utterly foreign to anything in his own experience, to anything he had imagined for his *protégé*. He wanted to say the right thing; but it was impossible for him to conceive how "a little four-year-old kid could get such a power over a big, strapping fellow like Dake Cramley."

There was no questioning, however, the change in his whole aspect. The dogged, hopeless look had disappeared. A new life, courage, energy, formed his tones and bearing. Tom feared so slight an influence would not be likely to endure. Still, it was something for the present, and he praised Dake with honest heartiness for the brave part he had played in rescuing the child from "that drunken old scoundrel."

And Dake flushed a little, as he always did under Draycott's praises.

Tom's first impulse was to offer to do something for the child; but a second thought made him resolve to leave that for another time. Just now Dake should have all the satisfaction of caring for his *protégée*. If doing this kept all his energies on the *qui vive*, it might prove his salvation.

"I haven't forgotten you, Dake, while I was away," he said at last, turning the conversation.

"If you had, it would have been the first time, Draycott."

"But I have been doing something as well as thinking."

Tom went on to relate his success in finding quarters for Dake at the farmhouse. "The country is a paradise; and you can have your swing round its hills and meadows, fields and woods, and all you have been hankering after. I'll see Meredith to-morrow, and try for a fortnight's vacation. What do you say to it?"

"Say to it? I'd have gone through fire and water to get there a little while ago. It's awful good of you, Draycott, but" — he drew a sigh that was almost a groan.

"Well?"

"There's Daisy, you know! If I should go off and leave her now, she'd break her heart, and I should think of her standin' at the window at night, and watchin' for me."

"The thing must have gone deep with the fellow!" Tom thought, but he only rejoined, —

"Have your own way about it, Dake. You can take your vacation earlier or later, as you choose, I fancy. When the time comes, I'm always ready to serve you with Meredith."

They parted at the Harvard Bridge, promising to see each other the following week.

As Tom took his seat in the car his complex feeling found expression in a muttered, —

"Of course I am enormously glad, but I am also tremendously obfuscated!"

XXVI

A STORY AND A SEQUENCE

DURING the next three weeks nothing eventful occurred in the relations of the two young men. Whenever they met, Tom was struck with the change in Dake's appearance. It seemed to pervade his whole being, as though some new force had been breathed into him. The old half defiant, half devil-may-care manner had vanished. He was cheerful, animated, responsive. He had gained a new poise, self-mastery, and interest in life, though he probably was not aware of the quality and depth of these changes in himself. Had you met the pair on some of their walks, and heard their young hearty laughter over each other's talk and jokes, you would have thought them as happy a brace as Boston held, while she panted through her dog-days.

There was one subject which was always certain to touch the quick with Dake Cramley. It was constantly recurring in his talk, it was evidently uppermost in his thoughts and interest; and this was the child he had rescued from the immigrants of the North End alley. There was a new light in his eyes, a change in his tone, whenever he mentioned her

name. He repeated her quaint, bright speeches: he dwelt on the simple, charming ways which made her such a surprise and delight to the household; he never wearied of picturing her to Tom — the pretty, restless, yellow-gold head, the big, star-like eyes, the rosy, smiling mouth; but he always stopped short, declaring there was no use in trying to describe Daisy. One must see her to know what she was.

Young Draycott was a good deal mystified; amused, too, after a fashion. For some reason, not quite clear to himself, he never attempted to quiz Dake on the matter. Whatever the small siren's charm might be, it evidently did not exist for him alone.

Dake confided to his friend the policeman's efforts to learn something of the child's history. As Mrs. Bray suggested, the man had seen her before setting out on his investigations. He had held her on his knee while she smiled and prattled to him, and he went straight from the influence of that interview to the North End alley.

A stern inquisition followed. Little additional knowledge, however, beyond the confirmation of Daisy Ross's name was elicited by all the questioning.

The English family, recently arrived in this country, were living in more respectable quarters, — the man had evidently dragged the household from bad to worse, — when Daisy was first brought to them for a few hours' care by an elderly woman who was staying near them, and with whom they had formed a

slight acquaintance. She was an American who had recently come to Boston with the child. Daisy, she said, was a double orphan, her mother, a young widow, having died only a few weeks before. She had promised the dead lady, whose maid and nurse she had been, to carry the child to Mrs. Ross's birth-place in the West, where some distant relatives, her own and her husband's, were still living. A sudden illness had detained the woman a fortnight in Boston, where she was a stranger. She was now so far recovered that she hoped to resume her journey the following week.

The day succeeding this talk, the house in which the maid and child were staying was burned to the ground. At the risk of her own life, the woman had rescued her charge, and some of her mistress's belongings; but the effort and exposure brought on a fresh attack of pneumonia, of which she died after a brief illness, during much of which she was unconscious.

The English woman had been kind to Mrs. Ross's maid during her last illness; and the child, full of infantile grief and amazement, had been left to the stranger's care, with what remained of her mother's valuables. These had disappeared in the family's frequent changes of abode — each one marking a lower descent until it reached the North End alley — and in the pressing need of money.

The dead woman had not mentioned the place from which she came or the one to which she was

bound. In any case it was doubtful whether the English family, to whom American geography must have been as unintelligible as to savages, would have remembered.

The officer was satisfied that this meagre information covered all the facts at present attainable of the child's history. The man, who, with his wife, had undergone this searching examination, was now tolerably sober, and thoroughly cowed by the appearance of the policeman on the scene. He attempted some bungling apology for his treatment of Daisy.

"It was the whiskey which got into his head and made him give her that cut with the cowhide. It was only one blow afore she was out of the house, smarter'n lightnin'. His wife — blast the woman! was to blame for al'ays coddlin' Daise as though she was somethin' finer than their own flesh and blood, and it made him mad when he was in liquor. A man liked to feel he was master in his own house."

The policeman closed his interview with some warnings so very much to the point that they probably caused his hearer to diminish the number of his drams, and modify for a time his abuse of his family.

In this way the tragedy of Daisy Ross's life at the North End came to a close. Beyond these scant facts, with many a hiatus and with no data of locality to furnish a clew for further investigation, her family history remained as much of a mystery as though she had come down from the moon.

XXVII

FACTS — WITH SUPPRESSIONS

TOM DRAYCOTT became conscious of an increasing desire to see his friend's infantile *protégée*. A formal call at Mrs. Bray's would not, he felt instinctively, furnish just the opportunity he wanted.

For the first time he began to think seriously of letting Dorothy, as well as Mrs. Dayles, into the secret of Duke's existence. His reasons for never alluding to him had been chiefly on his friend's account ; though, as we have seen, Tom's dislike of figuring in the *rôle* of benefactor had much to do with his silence.

But he saw now that his desire to meet Daisy Ross — at least in the way most satisfactory to himself — could not be carried out without some feminine concurrence.

Tom made up his mind to speak. He would tell the story in his own way, suppressing whatever was to Duke's disadvantage.

The time came most unexpectedly. One sultry afternoon, Tom, idling about the house, thrust his head into Dorothy's room. Mrs. Dayles happened to be there. Little puffs of wind came through open

windows from the far-away sea. Tom dropped into his favorite easy-chair.

"I believe this is the coolest place in the house," he said. "What a demure looking brace you are!"

"We shall be something less harmless than demure, now you have appeared on the scene!" replied Dorothy mischievously.

But Tom did not take up her challenge. It suddenly struck him that this was a particularly favorable juncture for introducing the topic which he had been for some time revolving in his mind.

He leaned his head luxuriously against the cushioned chair, and began in a leisurely, interrogative tone.

"You have never either of you heard me speak of Dake Cramley, I believe?"

"No." Dorothy's negative was decided. "Who is he? One of your Harvard fellows?"

"Not much! But—in short, his name means there's a story behind it."

"Ah, Tom, do tell it! We want to hear it—don't we, Nanty Dayles?"

The kind, tranquil face turned toward him.

"Of course we do. Tom's stories always have a ring to them."

"I've known the fellow some time, at least, since early last spring." Here Tom, with a few rapid touches, described Dake's personnel and then continued, "I met him first on the streets. Something in

his appearance struck me, and, in short, I turned about and spoke to him ! ”

“ Why, how very funny ! What did you say to him ? ” inquired Dorothy, with a girl’s liking for details.

“ I can’t stop to think up all that now, and please let me take my own way of telling — there’s a good girl ! I think I made the fellow believe I was his friend. His surprise and gratitude were the kind one does not meet with every day.

“ Afterward, in one of my tramps, I met him again. It was a glorious moonlit night, on the Belmont road. The fellow was all alone ; I suspected he was in trouble — succeeded in getting at the bottom facts at last. He was out of work, hadn’t anywhere to go, and was in a hard case generally. We walked down to the station together. Then, not to make a long story here, I managed in a short time to find a berth for the boy in Meredith’s warehouse. You know his old friendship for the *pater*. I struck that chord, happily, as the event proved. Dake has been there ever since, and, from all accounts, has done himself credit.”

Tom drew a breath of relief here. He had gone gingerly over this part of his narrative ; he had succeeded in interesting his audience ; he struck ahead boldly now ; he related with some detail his evening walks with Dake Cramley, and dwelt upon the sound sense, the native shrewdness, and the innate good

quality which was always cropping out in his talk. He painted sympathetically the restlessness and recoil amid the changed conditions of Dake's life at the warehouse. When the scene at the North End came up, Tom had dramatic material at his command. Such a story could not fail to touch the deepest, tenderest instincts of the girl and woman who drank in every word, silent, intent, breathless. When that was done, Tom Draycott had gained his point. Dake Cramley had taken the guise of a hero, if one somewhat in the rough, to both Dorothy and Mrs. Dayles.

Tom dwelt at some length on the change which had come over Dake since that night.

"Of course I can't conceive of all that. How a little kid of four years has managed to get that big fellow in her toils, and keep him steady at the treadmill when he was so fierce to cut the whole thing, staggers me! If she can exert such a spell now, what will she be a dozen or fifteen years later? Nanty Dayles, won't you solve the riddle?"

"I think," she said, with her soft, quiet smile, "the boy must love her very much."

"Oh, there's no doubt about that," said Tom jauntily.

"She must be a remarkable child anyhow. I wish I could see her," broke in Dorothy.

This was Tom's chance. "I confess to a sneaking wish to get a squint at her myself. Can't we con-

trive to get this magic-working midget out to Red Knolls? ”

“Of course we can. Ask Dake — what an odd name! — to bring her out some day.”

“But that wouldn’t work. The fellow is shy and not used to our ways. It would all end in his being out of his element, dumb and miserable.”

“I see, Tom. Nanty Dayles, we are in a dilemma. Come to our rescue!”

The elder woman reflected a moment. “If you could go yourself, my dear, and bring the child out, the young man might come for her in the evening. That would not be so formal, and he would be likely to feel less bashful among strangers.”

Tom swung himself up.

“That is a capital suggestion. Just hits the nail on the head! Why didn’t I think of it myself? Dake may fight shy at first, but I shall bring him round.”

“I will drive in some day next week and bring the child out,” continued Dorothy, rising to the occasion. “You must arrange all the details, Tom.”

“Of course.”

“And all this has been going on, and you have never breathed a syllable about it!” commented Dorothy, regarding her brother with pleased, curious eyes. Both she and Mrs. Dayles had perceived he kept in the background, so far as was possible, whatever part he had played in Dake Cramley’s

improved fortunes. "I think it was awful good in you."

"What was?"

"All the things you have done for him."

"Oh, bother my goodness!" said Tom Draycott.

XXVIII

A HARD-WRUNG CONSENT

AT the next meeting of the young men, Dake had at the beginning the talk mostly to himself. This was unusual. He had not the facile gift of speech which inheritance and careful training made second nature to Tom Draycott. The latter had his own purpose in leading the talk to-night to the subjects on which Dake was sure to expand. Tom laughed heartily at some of his mimicries of the child. It struck him for the first time that Dake had the making of an actor in him.

At last he seized the occasion.

"I am tired of hearing all these things at second-hand, Dake. You are a grim old Bluebeard to keep your small prodigy shut up like a prisoner in a fortress. Why won't you give another fellow some chance to see and hear her?"

"Nothing would please me better than that, Draycott," rejoined Dake heartily.

"But how are you going to bring it about?"

Dake reflected gravely a moment.

"Could you come round to the house? Or I might bring Daisy out for a walk some evening;

only it would be rather late for her by the time you got over."

"Decidedly ; and what chance would there be, in such a touch-and-go affair, of getting at the real Daisy ? That is the thing I am after now."

"Of course I have only to know what will suit you, Draycott, and I am ready to carry it out," added Dake earnestly.

They had turned a few moments before into the Public Garden ; they dropped down on a bench, removed their caps, and drank in great breaths of sweet evening air. The wind in the elms was like a dream of winds.

Tom was not long in unfolding the plan which he and Dorothy had arranged between them. Dake listened, motionless with attention. Tom did his best to anticipate all reluctances and objections which he divined on his companion's part, and to treat what he well knew must be an unprecedented event in Dake's experience, as a very commonplace affair.

"I have told my sister about Daisy, and she is just wild to see her. She will drive around to Mrs. Bray's and bring her over in the pony-carriage. That will give the child, too, a nice drive, and her first sight of Cambridge and Arlington. We are to have this affair, you see, all by ourselves, and give Daisy a good time, with no stiffness or ceremony of any kind. Nobody will be there but Nanty Dayles, who is the kindest, most motherly soul in the world.

In the evening you can come for Daisy, and I shall be there, of course, and we will walk down to the station, while my sister and Daisy will drive over. That is my plan, — all cut and dried. Can you find a flaw in it?"

"Not one, Draycott. Daisy would be jest wild to go. But don't you see?" Tom felt the recoil in every atom of the robust frame. "I ain't used to such things. They're out of my line. I shouldn't know how to act when the pinch came."

"Dake Cramley, I always thought you were a sensible fellow!"

"But you never could 'a' thought I was a cock-o'-the-walk like that big set you belong to."

"Well, if that is your reason, all I have to say is you are quite too much a cock-o'-the-walk to suit me just now."

"But I never was in such a swell house as yours. It's one thing to be out here under the trees and the stars with you, and another to be a visitor under your roof. I ain't got the manners to carry me through that part."

"When I insist that *I* want you to come — that it will be a pleasure to see you at *my* house, won't those reasons have some weight with you?"

"I might go up to the cannon's mouth for you, Draycott, but — don't you see? — this is different."

The dialogue of affirmatives and negatives went on for a quarter of an hour, perhaps. Tom car-

ried, one by one, Dake's defences. His weapons consisted mostly of grave arguments, alternated with earnest persuasions and some good-natured ridicule. At last he overbore all Dake's shyness and reluctance, and won a perfunctory promise that he would appear at Red Knolls. But even Tom had no adequate conception of how he shrank from the ordeal.

As for Daisy, Dake had no fears. One does not question how an angel will carry itself in the presence-chamber of kings. After all details of the visit had been duly arranged, Tom said, as they rose to leave, —

“Well, Dake, I shall see you next time under my own roof-tree. That will be a new experience to both of us.”

The kindest-intentioned speech sometimes goes wide of its mark. There was a flash of consciousness in Dake's face. Tom saw his mistake, and hastened to add:—

“I hope it may prove a pleasant one to you, Dake. As for myself, I have no doubt on the matter.”

Dake's mouth twitched. “I ain't any right to cross *your* threshold, Draycott!” his voice sharp with the pain that was alive and throbbing under it. “It all looks so different to me now from what it did then; and it looks wuss since I've come to know Daisy, and seen how she believes in me.”

“What do you mean, Dake?” asked Tom; but even while he spoke he understood. He knew that

Dake's thoughts had gone back to their earliest acquaintance — to a night on the Belmont Road.

There was a little silence; then Dake spoke, his voice half smothered in agitation.

"I mean things that have been done — things that you and I know — and that can't be undone."

The words, the tone, the look, which accompanied them, stirred all that was generous in young Draycott's nature.

"Dake, I didn't take you for such a fool!" he burst out. "You are not troubling yourself over that old affair?"

"How can I help it, Draycott?" Dake clinched his hands together, then wrung them apart as one might in physical agony. "It is al'ays comin' up to me when you are doin' me some new kindness, and it hurts — it hurts!" The monosyllables were a low, wailing cry.

Tom's heart was thrilled with unutterable pity. To think of the poor fellow's carrying about with him such a pain, such a memory!

"Sit down here, Dake," his voice sharp with determination. "We must have this thing out now and forever!"

They resumed their seats. The street lights shot long, glittering lances among the shadows that wavered whenever the winds, soft-fingered, touched the boughs overhead.

Tom laid his hand on Dake's shoulder.

“I had forgotten all about that,” he said in a quiet tone, with a great kindness all through it. “Even had I remembered, I should have said to myself, ‘If I had been in his case I should probably have done as he did, or worse.’”

Dake shook his head mournfully.

“Ah, but you’re saying all that to comfort me. It can’t undo things, Draycott — things that make me feel I ain’t fit to enter your house and look your people in the face.”

“It seems to me I am the sole party to decide that matter. As to what I just said, about my doing what you did in your case — well, if they were the last words I should ever speak, they would not be more absolutely true.”

Dake turned now and looked Tom in the eyes. The remorse and the misery were still in his own, but some new hope was struggling through them.

“Now, Dake,” continued Tom, “I am going to give you a chance to do something for me, — something that will send me off to-night, if you consent, a happier man.”

Dake sat more erect. “You know, Draycott, there’s nothing you can ask I ain’t ready to do.”

“Then you are to promise me — sacred word and honor, you understand — that you will never think of what has passed, and which is to me, and always will be, as though it had never happened.”

"Ah, but it did, it did, Draycott!" The anguish leaped again into his voice.

Tom felt as if the pain were in his own heart.

"Dake, that is not doing what I asked."

There was a little silence. Then Dake laid his hand on Tom's knees and Tom laid his own palm on the rougher hand, and listened.

In a moment the words struggled up low and hoarse, —

"I promise."

A few minutes later young Draycott was hurrying along the sidewalk whistling some Harvard tune and saying to himself, —

"Poor fellow! What tortures he must have suffered! And I had forgiven and forgotten it all so long ago."

Then suddenly, and in a way he had never done before, Tom Draycott thought of God's forgiveness. Was it in that way he forgave, only infinitely better, infinitely more!

Tom stopped whistling. A mist of tears flashed in his eyes.

XXIX

ONE THING AND ANOTHER

THE midsummer days were going, happy as days could go, over one little golden head under the roof-tree of Mrs. Jemima Bray. Daisy Ross had become the pet and darling of that miscellaneous household. She was a very incarnation of the sweetness, the freshness, the nameless charm, of childhood. She was alive in every fibre of her small organism, full of eager interest in the novel scenes about her, overflowing with pretty, quaint prattle, and keeping the long table, at which she sat in her high-chair between Dake and Mrs. Bray, attent and amused with her talk. Everybody petted her, repeated her bright questions, her sage comments, her amusing speeches. And with this one interest and pleasure in common, the natural result followed, — the people grew more friendly with each other.

As for Daisy herself, the dingy old house which had opened its arms so wide and taken her to its heart was just a heaven to her. There was no happier child the live-long day in the palace nurseries of the world than was Daisy Ross in Mrs. Bray's dingy little sitting-room. She unfolded like a flower trans-

planted to a kindlier soil in this new atmosphere of love and care which surrounded her. The peaked face rounded its curves; the pale cheeks gathered a soft wild-rose bloom, and the lips between which the small white teeth glanced bewitchingly were red as carnations.

A child lives mostly in the present. All that past which Daisy had so suddenly and absolutely left behind her became, for the most part, like some hideous nightmare from which one awakens into the wide, sweet, reassuring daylight. Each hour was crowded with fresh, delightful surprises and interests to the eager, curious child. The little plot of ground at the back of the house, with its straggling currant-bushes, its narrow flower-bed in a sunny corner, of sweet-williams, pinks, and yellow marigolds, and its one pear-tree, shorn of much of its ancient glory, was a source of never-failing delight to the child. It had never, in its pride of far-spreading boughs and snows of bloom, sheltered a fairer thing than that little golden head which in its old age came to sit in its lessening shadow.

That summer the robins had built a nest among the topmost boughs. Daisy would murmur to the birds in her soft, cooing voice, —

“O robins, away up there in the leaves, if you would only just come down here and light on my hand, and let me smooth your brown wings so softly! Then, in a minute, I’d let you fly back to your nest

hung up in the boughs, and I'd sit here a-listenin' while you sung to me. But you won't come, though I should call to you all day; you don't know me, and you fear I might be one of the bad folks who wouldn't let the little birds go again."

Daisy was extremely fond of Mrs. Bray, who coddled and doted on her; but the deepest loyalty of her child heart was reserved for Dake Cramley. He had been her Angel of deliverance. One hour and one scene were burned into her childish memory and imagination. She saw him always as he had looked at the moment when he had grasped her in his strong arms, and she stared up in the midst of her sobbing terror and pain to the kind, pitying eyes bent on her, before they turned in a blaze of fury on her tormentor. It was he who had brought her away from the old misery, and set her amid all the brightness and joy of her present life. Nobody could take his place; nobody be equal to him. She could not, of course, have put it in words; but none the less one scene and one hour had, to her eyes, set an aureole about his head.

Dake's return at night formed for Daisy the crowning event of the day. When the time drew near she would plant herself at the window, and such a shouting and clapping of hands as would ensue when she first caught sight of him!

Sometimes this programme would be changed. She would be standing motionless, breathless, with spark-

ling eyes and strained ears, behind the door, listening for the quick, well-known footfall.

When Dake entered he would carry out the joke, staring about him, and saying to himself, grave and puzzled, "What can have become of Daisy?"

Then she would spring from her hiding-place with screams of laughter, to be snatched up, and shaken, and mounted on his shoulder, and marched through the hall, while the sounds of the frolic would reach Mrs. Bray's ears, and make the worn, tired face break into a pleased smile.

But the happiest time, after all, though it was a quieter one, followed the supper hour, when the two would be together in Mrs. Bray's sitting-room, and Daisy, drawing up close to Dake's side, would relate all the events of the day. What a bright, varied chapter the childish imagination, the lisping, prattling tongue, made of it! So many things had happened! And all set in such glowing atmospheres of childish wonder, freshness, and delight. One day the man at the market had given her the loveliest pink rose, and said she was like that; another time somebody else had patted her curls and put a big orange in her palm—so big it took both hands to hold it. And then the sights she had seen on the way home; and the things in the shop-windows when she and Mrs. Bray stopped to look at them!

And Dake, drinking in all this talk, and breaking into a loud laugh occasionally over some sage remark

or some charming ignorance, found the whole as new and delightful an experience as it was to Daisy.

Sometimes they had walks in the dusk on wide streets, or around the Common; and Dake would overhear people say, —

“Did you see that beautiful child?”

“What wonderful eyes she has!”

At such times he was more pleased and proud than he could possibly have been at any compliment to himself. If Daisy overheard, she did not mind any more than the bobolinks, pouring out their hearts in song, mind when somebody praises their singing.

As for Dake himself, a great change had come over that youth. People — the world — seemed different. This was the case in a marked degree at Mrs. Bray's. It was too much to expect that she would maintain inviolable secrecy regarding the drama which had taken place at the North End. The part Dake had played could not fail to reach primeval instincts in human hearts. The young man, looked upon at first as rather an alien, found himself suddenly transformed to a hero in the regard of the household. Daisy's estimate of him, manifested in a thousand pretty, touching ways, was to some degree reflected in the minds of the others. Dake's fellow-boarders made friendly overtures, listened with interest when he spoke, and showed their kindly feeling in various forms. All this was as pleasant as it was novel an experience to Dake Cramley. His better self un-

folded in this atmosphere of approval. He had things to say ; and he said them in a pleasant, hearty way which had its effect. They began to talk of his good looks, his kindly smile, his pleasant eyes. Some of the boarders who had griefs or wrongs came to him with their troubles, and found him interested and sympathetic, as he would not have been if he had known less of hard lines himself.

There was a great change in the youth's whole aspect. Tom Draycott's influence had, of course, much to do with this. That Harvard youth was Dake's model and ideal. He never consciously sought to imitate his friend ; but he could not love and admire another so thoroughly without involuntarily falling more or less into his manners, his pronunciation, his forms of expression. Dake's mental faculties were above the average, and he was still young enough to be susceptible of improvement to almost any degree.

But, even when one is young, habits have a great power of asserting themselves. It was not in human nature that the old restlessness and hunger should not come back again, the longing for the old sweet, wandering freedom when he called no man master. That strain would probably be in Dake Cramley's blood while he lived. Perhaps it was some inheritance from rough, sea-faring forbears, or roaming gypsies. No amount of careful training would be likely to eradicate an impulse which had its legitimate rights.

But there was Daisy ! His thoughts always came back to her ; his heart always conquered at the last. The picture rose before him of the small, eager face watching at the window, the little golden head bent to listen behind the door for his footsteps ; he saw the doubt and wistfulness begin to creep over the happy face ; he saw the quivering lips, the shadow gathering in the bright eyes ; he knew perfectly well it would dog his steps and draw him back at night wherever he went.

He drew a long breath, and shook his head in a hopeless way.

"I couldn't leave Daisy. It would break her heart !" he replied to something that hungered and clamored inside of him.

It was little more than a baby's soft hand ; but it had a power to hold him mightier than steel cables.

XXX

“A POOR LITTLE INNERCENT PAGAN”

DAISY ROSS seldom alluded to her past life, and Mrs. Bray and Dake Cramley had agreed between themselves to avoid the subject.

One day, however, it came up. Mrs. Bray and the child were alone together. Daisy was absorbed in her new tea-set — some coarse bits of painted pottery which one of the boarders had brought her, and which, in the child's eyes, were precious and beautiful as rarest porcelain.

As Mrs. Bray watched the child with pleased eyes a new thought struck her.

“Land o' Goshen!” she exclaimed. “I forgot all about that; I must be gettin' no better than an idol-worshippin' heathen, with all these boarders. We'll begin this very night!”

“What shall we begin?” asked Daisy, looking up from her toy cups and saucers.

“To say, ‘Now I lay me,’ child.”

“I don't know what that is.”

“It's a nice little verse — a prayer which good little children al'ays say to God every night. He's a long way off, but all the same he can hear.”

Daisy started and shuddered.

"I don't want to say anything to *him*!" she cried sharply.

Mrs. Bray was bewildered, shocked.

"Do you know what you are sayin', Daisy? Do you know who God is?"

"He's something big and awful," answered the child, forgetting her toys and on the point of breaking down into a sob. "That bad man called on him every time he was drunk. He'd shout his name and curse everybody. I don't want to say anything to *him*."

With sudden terror, as the old scenes came back, she ran to Mrs. Bray and hid her face in the woman's lap. She drew Daisy into her arms, and soothed her with tender words and caresses. All the while she was saying to herself, —

"This is the very last hour you shall be a poor little innercent pagan!"

As soon as the child was quieted, Mrs. Bray set about her missionary work. She devoted the afternoon to it. It was all as novel, as startling, as awe-inspiring to the imaginative child as the story of God and his heaven must be to the young South Sea Islander when he leaves his fetish to hear about them for the first time.

Mrs. Bray's talk of course took a tinge, more or less, from her own personality. Her theology was partly composed of the creed of her childhood, of

Bible verses which lingered in her memory, and of pious hymns and songs. No doubt many good people would have found curious contradictions, and much to criticise and supplement in this talk; but the story she told that afternoon in the stuffy old sitting-room to the sweet, eager child was the one which is the life and hope of Christendom. Daisy's swift child's imagination, her warm heart, her native intuitions, seized upon that central truth, alike for the small and the great, the wise and the ignorant, the great Power, the greater Love, at the heart of the universe. It was all very realistic to the child. She broke in with innumerable questions, some of which made Mrs. Bray laugh, and some made her cry, and others sorely perplexed her to answer.

Daisy's notions regarding the geography of heaven were very much mixed. She gathered at last a vague idea that it was somehow “pieced on” to the end of this world. She had not any clear idea of what death meant. Mrs. Bray's talk did not include that subject. She could not herself remember a time when she did not know “everybody must die,” and probably took for granted that that knowledge, as Dogberry thought of reading and writing, “comes by nature.”

“And heaven is such a grand, beautiful place,” repeated Daisy, her child's imagination dwelling on this salient point. “Is it such a very long way to get there?”

"Oh, no, my dear — not when the time comes to go."

"But *how* do we go?"

There was a little pause. The memory of one of her child-hymns came to Mrs. Bray opportunely.

"We go over the River Jordan."

"What is a river?"

"It is water — a great wide stretch of water. Everybody has to go to heaven that way."

Daisy's eyes grew dark and startled. She clung closer to Mrs. Bray.

"But I should be afraid! I should be drown'd!"

"Oh, no, Daisy. God would look out for that. He would send his own beautiful angel to carry you over. The water wouldn't hurt you."

She sat still, pondering a little while, the radiance growing in the great eyes. Then she asked softly, —

"And you say my own mamma has gone to that beautiful heaven?"

"Of course she has; and she's a-waitin' for you, my blessed darlin'. All good folks go straight there when they die."

"And she will know me, you think? You see, I'm so much bigger now!" Then, before Mrs. Bray could reply, she continued, "But I could ask some angel where she was; and when he told me, I could go straight to her and say, 'I'm Daisy!' That would be enough."

A while afterward she asked gravely, “You say the good folks go to héaven, *Miss Bray*; where do the bad ones go?”

Mrs. Bray always felt she was inspired to reply, which she did after a brief pause, speaking very solemnly, —

“Daisy, you know what the bad people are — the people who don’t believe in God, or care to please him. You know what kind of a place they make here. Would they want to go to God do you think?”

The child thought of the North End. She drew one of her long, wavering breaths.

“No, they wouldn’t,” she said.

That evening when she and Dake were alone together, she broke out on the subject of which her heart and thoughts were full.

“O Dakie, I’ve been learning all about it!”

“About what?”

“About God, who is so great and good, and who is our Father, and who lives in his big, beaut’ful heaven, and who will take us all there — all the good folks, I mean — to stay and be happy for always and always. My own papa and mamma are there, and you and I will go and see them some time. But why didn’t *you* tell me, Dakie?”

As he heard the question, as he looked at the child, something in Dake Cramley’s soul was stirred into a longing to be all the child believed him. He

felt for the moment like a secret impostor in that small presence. If she could know the real Dake, would she, amazed and horrified, turn and flee from him forever? Scenes of his past life, things he had done without a question of right or wrong concerning them, came up now. Memories stabbed him; his conscience was quickened: he was acquiring new ethical standards, new processes of thought and motive powers, and he did not realize that this was partly due to the influence of the child who absolutely believed in and trusted him.

He felt to-night as though a great gulf lay between them. Yet he would not consciously, by word or act, have soiled that transparent childish innocence, any more than her dead mother would have done.

But her big, questioning eyes were on his face.

“I—I thought I’d leave Mrs. Bray to tell you about that,” speaking the thing which came first.

“But why, Dakie,” she lisped very earnestly, “when you and I are goin’ there some time, you know? Of course you would wait for me until I comed, as I should for you if I got there first.”

“Of course *you’ll* get there all right, Daisy,” devouring her with his eyes. “As for *me*, that’s another question!”

She sat still in her small rocking-chair by his side, regarding him with some wonder and concern in her upraised eyes. Something in his tone or manner struck and confused her childish instincts. She

could not have put her feelings into words, but she had a vague intuition that something was troubling him.

She sprang up impulsively, and crossed her arms on his knee, which was one of her pretty attitudes.

“Dakie, I know just how it will be. Shall I tell you?” she asked.

“Oh, yes!” patting her head. These caressing movements had grown very natural to him, though at first he had been shy and awkward at attempting them. “I want to hear, Daisy.”

“Well, it will be just this way. When the time comes you’ll walk up and stand at the gate, and the angel that keeps it will hear and call out loud, —

“ ‘Who’s there?’

“And you’ll tell him your name. And then the great shinin’ gate will go back with a loud b-a-n-g, and the beaut’ful angel with the great white wings will say, —

“ ‘Oh, I know who you be! Come right in, Dakie!’ ”

Two or three days after this conversation Daisy was taken suddenly ill. When Dake returned at night there was no small golden head at the window, no rush of little feet, with laughing shouts, in the hall.

A thousand fears started like dark spectres in his thoughts. He hurried to Mrs. Bray’s room, where

it was a relief to find Daisy, though she lay like a storm-swept flower on the lounge. The wild rose had paled in her cheeks. When she heard Dake's footstep she roused herself a little, smiled faintly, and tried to speak; but the words died amid panting breaths and a little sharp moan of pain. Then the long, shining lashes closed heavily over her eyes.

Mrs. Bray was bending over the child, anxious, and somewhat alarmed. She had noticed that Daisy was not well that morning, and the child had drooped during the day and grown feverish. The woman had been hurrying back and forth, applying the remedies with which her experience of childish ailments made her familiar.

But Dake, who had very little knowledge of illness, was torn with fears at sight of his prostrate darling. He followed his hostess into another room. His face was blanched; he tried to speak, but the words died in a husky sound in his throat.

"Don't be so upset, my dear young man," said Mrs. Bray, laying her hand on his shoulder. "It all comes of them pesky plums! They wasn't ripe, and I ought to have stood out ag'in her eatin' 'em. What with candies and rich cakes and fruit of one sort and another the boarders are al'ays bringin' that child, it's a wonder her little stomach wasn't upset before this. Of course folks mean well, and I've done my best to warn 'em, but it did as much good as talkin' to the winds. When she gets well I shall put my foot down!"

Dake, somewhat reassured, returned to Daisy; but the sight of the little white face under that curtain of golden hair sent a fresh chill to his heart. The thought that Daisy might die flashed over him. It seemed like blotting the sun out of heaven. The terror that clutched at his heart leaped out in an anguished cry, —

“O God, leave me Daisy! Only leave me Daisy!”

It was his first prayer.

Mrs. Bray’s diagnosis proved correct, and her remedies effectual.

The next morning Daisy was better, and her whole system rebounded with the elasticity of a healthy child. But the absence of that little bright presence from the table had made a deep impression. Mrs. Bray seized the occasion to paint in strong terms the danger to which Daisy had been exposed; she implored her household not to tempt the little palate, and risk the child’s life.

XXXI

NOT HEAVEN, BUT RED KNOLLS

EARLY one afternoon a small basket-carriage with a yellow awning and the daintiest little thoroughbred dark-coated mare were drawn up before Mrs. Bray's front door. In the parlor, awaiting the hostess, a young lady had been seated for several minutes. This was Dorothy Draycott.

She glanced about the parlor, her young eyes taking in the whole, — the old-fashioned, faded ingrain carpet of sprawling crimson figures on a background of dark green; the chairs and sofa upholstered in hair-cloth of the fashion of half a century ago; the high carved mantel-piece, ornamented with a good deal of ware in china figures and high-colored vases. Dorothy was conscious, despite the open windows, of various culinary odors in the air. These seemed a part of the place as much as the large red figures of the carpet, or the stags' heads on the wall paper.

The door opened, and a thin, tallish woman with a sallow, plaintive kind of face, and a rather company smile which puckered all the lines about her mouth, entered the room.

Dorothy rose at once. The tired, worn elderly

woman, whose life had long been a struggle with hard fortunes, and whose years were now getting deeper among their autumnal frosts, and the young girl whose life had been nested in a refined and elegant home, and amid all wise and tender family loves, and whose years were in the dew and blossoming of their Maytime, looked curiously at each other.

"Mrs. Bray, I believe?" said Dorothy. The soft young voice was pleasant to hear. "I am Miss Draycott."

Mrs. Bray made her best bow, and expressed herself as very happy to meet Miss Draycott. She had donned her black silk gown, which had seen a good many years' service, in honor of the occasion.

Dorothy stated her errand briefly. She had called for Daisy Ross. No doubt Mrs. Bray understood how the matter had all been arranged between her brother Tom and Mr. Cramley.

Mrs. Bray acquiesced. Daisy was all ready to go, she said, and had hardly talked of anything else for the last two days.

After exchanging a few more sentences, Mrs. Bray, excusing herself, left the room. In a few moments she returned, leading by the hand what struck Dorothy as the loveliest child she had ever seen.

The household, its feminine portion at least, had been aroused to a deep interest in this projected visit of Daisy to Red Knolls. Her dress for the occasion

had been a matter of grave conference between the landlady and some of her boarders. The ultimate was a child's white frock of barred muslin, with a girdle of light sky-blue ribbon. A pretty straw hat was scarfed and looped with the same shade. A pair of new morocco slippers completed the whole.

Daisy stood still a few moments gazing at the stranger with delighted, wide-eyed surprise. She had the fearlessness and trust of perfect childish innocence; and when Dorothy leaned forward with outstretched hands, she came over to her at once, and asked, while her eager breath panted through the words, —

"Have you come for me to go with you to Red Knolls?"

Dorothy bent down, and the two sweet mouths kissed each other.

"Yes, I have come, Daisy. The carriage is at the door; and, as Mrs. Bray kindly tells me you are ready, we will start at once."

Mrs. Bray was a proud and pleased woman as she watched that afternoon from her front door the small carriage with the little shiny coated thoroughbred roll away. When it had disappeared she turned in-doors with a feeling, which was perhaps stronger because she did not stop to analyze it, that her life had been brightened and lifted to a plane of higher consequence by this visit. Some crumbs from the richer, fairer board had fallen to her own share.

Dorothy struck off soon into the wider, statelier thoroughfares. Daisy sat very still by her side, drinking in with wondering eyes the novel scenes about her. Dorothy smiled down occasionally; but her attention was a good deal engaged at this point by Sphinx, and there was very little talk on either side.

When they reached the Harvard Bridge, Daisy suddenly caught sight of the river, blue and sparkling under the summer skies.

She gave a swift start; she drew closer to Dorothy. A great wonder, a possible fear, was in her face.

"What is that?" she asked in an awed tone.

"That is the river, Daisy, — the great, beautiful river. Don't you know?"

"And are we going over it?"

"Yes; but there is nothing in the world to be afraid of. I shall take care of you."

Dorothy's words, with the tone and smile, seemed to reassure the child. She drew a long breath, and gazed in silent wonder at the sparkling waves. Occasionally she turned and stared curiously at Dorothy with a half-awesome look in her radiant eyes. The young girl always smiled back. She wondered a little what was going on in that small brain; she tried to put herself in Daisy's place, seeing that water for the first time.

When they had crossed the bridge Dorothy turned to her charge, saying, —

"There was no danger, you see, Daisy."

"No; I wasn't afraid," she answered; and again she looked at Dorothy with her bright, curious gaze.

They drove up North Avenue, and out on the pleasant Arlington highway. It was a perfect midsummer afternoon. Light winds from the sea breathed their coolness through the air. Familiar as the whole scene was to Dorothy Draycott, it seemed to have been touched with some new poetic charm and ideality. Every year has its days of this sort. They are only a little handful at best; but they belong to a higher mood than ordinary days, and seem to stand, like divine messengers, beautiful and glorified, between all the storms which have been and all which are to come. Wearied hearts are quickened, and dulled imaginations are exalted. New vistas unfold themselves in these finer atmospheres, and the soul has glimpses of the nobler meanings and the real grandeur of human life.

As they drove along through the lavish greenery, through the shade and shine, and all the summer bloom whose flood-tide was drowning the land, Dorothy's young heart sang within her. Was this only an everyday afternoon? she asked herself. Did this ineffable charm and loveliness exist only in her own eyes? She wondered how it seemed to the small creature at her side, whose big eyes were devouring it all, and to whom it must be almost as novel as the landscape of another planet. But she sat silent, ab-

sorbed, and Dorothy left the beauty to tell its message in its own way to the child's heart, as blunter sympathies or a coarser imagination would not have done.

At last they reached Red Knolls, and swept around the great terraces and the ample driveway to the front.

And Daisy, ushered by its girl-mistress, entered the house.

For the next two hours the pair went about from large room to room, up stairs and down, of the spacious home. The furnishings, the decorations, the whole effect, were of course a new, almost overpowering spectacle to Daisy Ross. Occasionally she asked a question. Her eyes did the rest. It seemed to Dorothy that they grew into great, radiant interjection points.

At length they came down-stairs, and stood together in the wide hall, and again Daisy looked at her young hostess with that singular unfathomable gaze. What did it mean? Dorothy began to wish the child would find her tongue.

A sudden movement puzzled her. Daisy had slipped behind her back. In a moment the small head reappeared again.

"Do you take them off sometimes?" she inquired softly, eagerly.

"Take off what, Daisy?"

"I mean your wings."

"But I have no wings, Daisy."

"I thought all angels had wings," in a rather disappointed tone.

"I believe they have, Daisy."

Then Dorothy began to get a glimpse into the heart of things. She drew Daisy to her.

"O child! what made you think that?"

She was a young girl, moved to swift mirth by all things absurd or incongruous; but she could not laugh now.

"Ain't *you* one?" inquired Daisy, gravely staring at Dorothy.

"Oh, no — no — not in the least!"

"I thought you was when I see the River Jordan. Miss Bray told me the angels would carry me safe over to heaven."

The mystery of the long silence, the bright, awed wonder in the eyes, blue as summer seas in cloudless noondays, was all getting very clear to Dorothy now.

"But, my little Daisy, that was not the River Jordan at all; it was the Charles River."

"Nobody ever telled me there was another river; but it must lead to heaven too," she added confidently.

"What makes you so sure, Daisy?"

"Because it's all so beaut'ful here. I don't b'lieve heaven can be beaut'fuller!"

"Oh, yes, it is — a great, great deal!"

This dialogue had been punctuated with frequent hugs and caresses on the part of Dorothy. She

lifted the child on her lap now, and after a brief process of reasoning, such as she found adapted to her little kindergartners, Daisy was convinced that Miss Draycott was not the angel, nor Red Knolls the heaven, nor Charles River the Jordan she had fancied them. She listened, grave and eager, twisting her little fingers together while Dorothy talked. It was evident that she gave up her idea reluctantly; but she was soon solaced with the thought that if heaven was not at hand, all this beauty was still left. She confessed to Dorothy she had been on the lookout for the great walls and the big shining gates, and wondered they did not appear. She also avowed her intention of telling the angel who kept guard there her name, with a request that he would give her a home just like the one at Red Knolls. She inquired with some anxiety of Dorothy whether she thought he would be likely to do this?

"Oh, you adorable little darling!" exclaimed Dorothy. "I think you will have whatever you want."

She hugged Daisy again. After this there was no more silence. Daisy's prattle had all the freshness and charm of her childhood. She gave Dorothy numerous glimpses into her life at Mrs. Bray's. It barely covered a month, and yet it seemed to fill all the child's horizon.

One figure was always in the foreground of this talk. It was that of Dake Cramley. Daisy drew

rapid, vivid pictures of their lives together, of his coming home at night, of the fun and frolic that ensued, and of their evening walks on the Common.

As Dorothy listened, she felt a greater curiosity than ever to see the youth.

At last Hidalgo came in. Dorothy knew that this meant he was on the watch for his young master's return. She felt a good deal of curiosity regarding Tom's first interview with Daisy. It would be a fine test of the small creature's fascinations. Tom was no admirer of children in the aggregate; he regarded them as "insufferable, clamorous little nuisances, sure to get in the way and make their wants voluble at the wrong time."

That huge-limbed, solemn-faced Hidalgo fascinated Daisy at once. He stretched his long length on the floor and looked at the novel specimen of feminine humanity before him with solemn, unwinking gravity.

At last Daisy was persuaded to go over and stroke his head. She did this very tentatively at first. Hidalgo, usually reserved with strangers, submitted to her advances without the ghost of a growl. In a little while she was pinching his ears and patting his spine. Of all the wonderful objects she had seen at Red Knolls, Hidalgo was the most interesting. Dorothy, called a short time from the room, left the pair alone together on the happiest terms with each other.

"Hidalgo, you've got a long, grand name. And

you are the awfulest big dog I ever see, and I like you truly. Can you hear what I say now?" she asked, one little arm stretched as far as it would reach about his neck.

At that instant a tall, blond, sinewy-framed young man entered the room. He glanced at the group, made a formal bow to the child, went over to the lounge, and seated himself with the air of one who felt perfectly at home. Hidalgo rose at once and carried his long length over to him.

Daisy rose too, and returned to her low chair. The young man and the child looked at each other in absolute silence, she with the solemn, steady, probing gaze of childhood, and he with a face empty of every expression as was possible to an intelligent human being. In this way the two stared at each other for more than a minute. He, meanwhile, under the gargoyle-like visage he had drawn on, was mentally saying, —

"What a stunning pair of eyes!"

Then a sudden change, a flash of intelligence, came over the child's face.

"Oh, I know who *you* be!" she exclaimed. "You are Mr. Tom Draycott. Dakie told me about you; he says you are the goodest man in the world."

"Whew! that is a staggering compliment to hurl at a fellow's head."

"But Dakie says so," persisted Daisy, rather indignantly, as though his word had been impugned;

and then another season of solemn stare followed on both sides.

Of course Tom had identified the small stranger at a glance. At last the prolonged stare was transformed into a smile. Tom Draycott's had a singular attraction of its own. In a few moments Daisy slipped off her chair, ran across the room, and lifted up her face to him. The whole action was simply bewitching. Tom bent his head and kissed her heartily. Then he lifted the little figure and seated it by his side.

"So you are Daisy Ross," he said, regarding with pleased, curious eyes the lovely, rosy incarnation of childhood before him; "Dake's Daisy?"

"Yes; I am his more than anybody's." She nestled back on the deep lounge until her feet rested on its edge. The little polished black slippers caught her attention. She gazed at them admiringly, her head bent a little on one side. Then she turned to Tom.

"They was new to-day," she said. "Don't you think they're nice?"

"Very; and I think the little white feet inside those slippers must be very nice too."

"Oh, I never thought about them!"

"How did you get here, Daisy?" asked Tom, for the purpose of drawing her out.

"I comed in a beaut'ful carriage, and the loveliest lady brought me. I didn't know there could be any

place like this. I thought it was" — she stopped, gazing at him intently with her great eyes, which now were the shade of the gentians that grow in lonely, moist places.

"What did you think it was?"

"I don't believe I can tell you."

"But why not?"

"I don't know — just. Maybe it's 'cause I haven't seen you very long."

"But I hope we can be the best of friends, so you can tell me anything."

"P'r'aps I can; but it takes a little while, you know."

When Dorothy returned a little later she found the two in the full tide of the most amusing talk. Daisy sat beside Tom, with the fearlessness of absolute innocence, her bright, quaint rejoinders to his questions going straight to the point.

"Do you two live here?" she asked after a little while, gazing from one to the other.

"Yes," said Dorothy.

"Always?"

"Oh, yes."

"Is she your wife?" she asked, turning to Tom.

This was a challenge it was not in young human nature to resist. He drew his most solemn face.

"No, thank the fates, she is not my wife. As it is, I can barely hold my own in some feeble, inadequate fashion; but I shudder to think of the forlorn,

submissive, henpecked creature I should be reduced to if she were more than my sister."

This chaffing bewildered Daisy. She stared from one to the other.

"Which is nicest, wife or sister?" she interrogated gravely.

"If you should ask me that question, say fifteen years later, I should tell you 'wife,' by all means; but I should be such a venerable creature by that time that you would doubtless give me the mitten."

"I don't wear mittens; I wear gloves," with a pretty assumption of infantile dignity. "But if you should want a mitten, and I had one, I'd give it to you. What could you do with it, though?"

She placed her little hand by the side of his big, muscular one, brown with rowing and ball games, and then she looked up archly in his face and laughed.

All this talk was accented by nameless childish movements and gestures, by lisps and little indrawn breaths, and inflected verbs which followed their own law of analogy, and by articulation which stammered and failed sometimes among the trisyllables.

"Well," said Tom after a little more of this chaffing, "if you are not the most bewitching mite of feminine humanity that ever came within my experience! I shudder for my sex, thinking what you will be — say less than two decades from this time."

Daisy evidently did not appreciate this compliment.

"I shall be just the same," she said, "only bigger — ever so much bigger."

"Ex — act — ly! Pre — cise — ly!" drawled Tom. "Be just what you are this moment, only 'bigger — ever so much bigger,' — and all mankind will be at your feet."

"I shouldn't want 'em there," with a little disgusted movement of her head. "I should say, 'Oh, don't! Do get up, please.'"

She was growing bewildered and annoyed. Dorothy, who had been greatly amused by this dialogue, felt it was time to interfere.

"You will have her crying if you go on in this teasing way," she said to Tom *sub voce*.

Daisy slipped off the lounge, resumed her chair by Dorothy's side, turned to Tom, and said with a disapproving air and tone, —

"I don't unnerstand your kind of talk."

"Why, my little Daisy, I wouldn't tease you for the world! Doesn't Dakie joke you and make fun sometimes?"

"Ye — es; but I unnerstand his talk, and I don't your kind."

"Well, you can understand this. I'm very sorry. Won't you forgive me this time?"

Tom's smile accented his words. After a moment or two Daisy rose, went over and lifted her face to give him a kiss, which was returned in double measure.

"O Tom Draycott," thought Dorothy, "how

often I have heard you insist that kissing babies and small fry in general was the most horrible nuisance to which a man could be subjected ! ”

A little later, when Dorothy was again obliged to leave them, Tom, in order to cement their late reconciliation, took Daisy out in the grounds. He escorted the delighted child among the winding paths and the terraces, the flower-beds and the ancient fruit-trees. The cherries had all gone by this time, but the early apples were getting mellow ; and when she looked at them wistfully among the leaves, Tom promised to send her a nice basket of the fruit in a few days. Then there was the crowning glory of all, the swing on the high terrace under the elm-tree. Tom placed her carefully in the seat, and then with his strong arms sent the little figure sweeping off amid rapturous shrieks until it brushed the lower elm boughs.

What a half-hour that was among the grounds of Red Knolls ! Many a fair young girl would have envied Daisy her gallant escort.

She sat erect at the table that night, and was a perfect little lady. With some instinct of propriety, this child, so late from the North End tenement, and with only memories which reached dimmer than dreams beyond it, carried herself with a simple, transparent ease in the new atmosphere, amid the gracious surroundings, which left nothing to criticise. She was like some perfect wild-flower which bursts, a glory of bloom, upon the summer highway ; while

those who watched her loveliness seemed almost to hear nature saying, —

“Can all your rich soils and hothouse culture equal my wilding?”

She sat in a high chair by Dorothy, and for a while was quite silent, absorbed in the novel scene and service about her. At last she spoke with a half-conscious apology, —

“*Miss Bray* said I must put on my comp’ny manners when I got here, and I told her I would, only I hadn’t any of that kind.”

To those who listened, this remark seemed to have a quality of inborn fineness which no high breeding could have surpassed.

XXXII

AN EVENING

It was getting dark outside. They were in the sitting-room, — the young Draycotts and Daisy, — when the child suddenly sprang to her feet; her quick ears had caught a familiar voice in the hall.

“Why, that’s Dakie!” she exclaimed joyfully; and as the door opened to admit the new-comer, she bounded across the room, and turned to the others with a face which said plainly, —

“Lo! the conquering hero comes!”

There he stood, big, shy, blushing, in doubt what to do with his hands and feet.

It was a terrible moment for Dake Cramley. This elegant home, this refined atmosphere, the whole existence which they suggested, were something utterly alien to his experience. He wished the earth would open and swallow him up.

Tom came forward at once.

“Dake, old fellow,” in the long familiar tones, “I am heartily glad to see you. Let me present you, Mr. Dake Cramley, to my sister, Miss Dorothy Draycott.”

Dake managed to bow to the tall, graceful girl who was gazing at him with her large, curious eyes; he tried to speak her name, but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth.

Dorothy's heart and instinct were, however, equal to the occasion.

"I feel already acquainted with you, Mr. Dake," the clear young accents broke from smiling lips. "I have heard so much of you from my brother, and Daisy has been sounding your praises all the afternoon."

The child burst out now eagerly, —

"O Dakie, I thought this was heaven, and Miss Draycott the angel, until I found she hadn't any wings!"

"She doesn't need any!" replied Dake. It was the first gallant speech he had ever made to a woman.

Tom, who was in full sympathy with Dake's embarrassment, and strongly desirous his *protégé* should make a favorable impression, said to himself, —

"Well done, Dake! None of your drawing-room fellows could have carried it off better than that."

After this Dake gradually grew more at his ease, and, as he forgot himself, was able to take his part in the talk with young Draycott.

The feeling between the two struck Dorothy with surprise. They seemed to her like old chums. She watched Dake with much curiosity. She made up

her mind that he was really good-looking — quite picturesque with his dark skin, his black hair and eyes. His smile was pleasant, and broke up the gravity of his face; and his laugh, when Tom or Daisy said something to bring it out, had a hearty, boyish ring.

As for Daisy, she almost surpassed herself to-night. A good deal excited by the events of the day, and the atmosphere of loving admiration about her, which she unconsciously felt, she was, if possible, more quaint and bewitching than in the afternoon.

Nobody who saw them together could doubt Dake's feeling for the child. He was so proud of her! When she said anything particularly bright or amusing he would often turn to Dorothy, and a glance of pleased intelligence would pass between the two. He and his young hostess soon learned they had some common ground on which they could meet. Daisy Ross was, after all, a chief harmonizing factor in that evening's pleasure.

“Tom has told me, Mr. Dake,” said Dorothy, at once tactful and cordial, “a great deal about your evening strolls together in Boston. I shall imagine now when he disappears without word or sign as soon as dinner is over, that he has gone after you.”

“I hope it will always be true, Miss Draycott.”

Then Dake turned and looked at Tom. Dorothy never forgot that look. It was full of unutterable admiration, gratitude, devotion.

To think of that teasing, careless, hare-brained, fun-loving Tom being the object of such a look as that! It set him in a new light before his sister.

Tom must have seen the look; but then it was more of an old story to him.

At this point Mrs. Dayles entered the room. Daisy had seen her at dinner; and, amid all the novel sights, the kind, motherly face under its gray hair had attracted the child. Tom presented his friend to Mrs. Dayles, and soon afterward proposed to carry off Dake to his own "den" for a little while.

The child gazed at the woman a few moments with her bright, intent gaze, and then springing up she darted over to her.

"I am glad you have come again," she said earnestly. "Do you live here always?"

"Oh, no! My home is a long way off, Daisy; but I have come here to stay with these young people while their father and mother are away."

"Yes; I unnerstand now." Daisy drew a long, meditative breath.

"Is your home like this?" she asked a moment later.

"No, my child; it is not nearly so grand or beautiful as this."

Here Dorothy interposed. "But, Daisy, it is the dearest, most delightful old home in the world. If you once get there you will never want to leave it. Tom and I know all about it. We have had such

happy times there ever since we were bits of children."

"Oh, do tell me all about it, Nanty Dayles!" implored Daisy, speaking for the first time the name her quick ears had caught at the table.

Mrs. Dayles took the child on her lap. For the next hour Daisy drank in stories of the old Vermont farmstead, amid its orchards and meadows and fragrant pine woods. Her interest and curiosity were boundless. Dorothy added her own childish reminiscences of happy frolicsome days in the fair Northern farm-country. Daisy broke in with breathless questions, her dancing eyes going from one to the other.

"Are squirrels as big as bears?" she inquired after Mrs. Dayles had endeavored to describe them. Daisy had seen a black bear once at the North End. A man was leading him through the alley by a big chain.

"Oh, no, my dear! They are hardly larger than a big-sized kitten. Such a pretty sight as it is to see them darting up the trees, and whisking their bushy tails, and eating their chestnuts!"

"How I wish I could see them!" with another of her long-drawn breaths.

"And why can't you?" responded Mrs. Dayles, drawing the child to her heart. "If you will come to me, I will take the best care in the world of you, my darling!"

“And then — and then ” — there was a moment's pause. “But oh, if Dakie could come too!”

“Yes; Dakie shall come too.” Mrs. Dayles promptly affirmed.

After a while the young men, having had their talk out, appeared.

Daisy leaped from Mrs. Dayles's lap, bounded toward Dake, her words breaking out in an eager torrent, the sentences fairly tumbling against each other, —

“O Dakie! you don't know what a wonderful place it is; and you and I are to go there, — I mean where Nanty Dayles lives, — and see the colts scamperin' over the fields, and the cows come home at night through the lanes, and the squirrels run up the trees, and hear the birds sing all day! We are to go — you and I — Nanty Dayles says so.”

Then Tom spoke. “That is the head and crown of plans! You shall take Daisy along with you, Dake, and have your vacation there. You will find it just a paradise. Perhaps Dollikins and I will run up and join you for a day or two, if we can cut college and kindergarten for that space of time. What do you say to it all, Nanty Dayles?”

“The more the merrier,” she answered, smiling on her big boy.

Then the maid appeared with cream and fruit, and the talk waxed gay on all sides.

“Of course,” said Tom, “with the fun glinting in

his eyes, "my nose is fatally out of joint now you have arrived, Dake; but if a certain small person multiplied her birthdays by four, you and I would be deadly rivals."

Daisy stopped eating her cake and berries. She stared at the speaker perplexed for a minute or two; then she slipped off her chair, set her saucer and plate on the table, ran over to Tom, inspected one side of his face anxiously, then leaned over and did the same with the other side. Nobody spoke; everybody watched her.

She lifted her head suddenly, and exclaimed in a tone of joyful assurance, "Why, your nose is on all right!"

It seemed as though the shouts and peals of laughter must shake the solid old house.

Daisy looked surprised and rather hurt. "I thought you said something ailed your nose," she explained.

Tom took her on his knee.

"I want to tell you a secret nobody else must know. May I?" he asked.

"Yes, you may," looking pleased and important.

"I think you are just the sweetest, dearest little Daisy in the world."

At last the carriage was at the door. Outside the world lay drowned in the summer moonshine. It had been arranged that Dorothy and Daisy should drive to the station, where Tom and Dake would join them in time for the Boston train.

Mrs. Dayles seized her chance now. She and Dake had exchanged only a few words and an occasional interested glance that evening. She came to him now, and said in her gentle, sincere voice, —

“I shall expect you will come, Mr. Dake, and bring that dear little Daisy with you, and stay as long as you can.”

She gave him her hand; she looked at him with her bright, kind eyes. “My dear young man, you will excuse an old woman for saying so, but you look to me as though some mothering would do you good. Won’t you come and let me try it?”

Were there such mothers as this in the world? A memory of his own rose before Dake. If she had been like this woman, what a difference it would have made to him!

His lips twitched. The words would not come. But all he felt was in his eyes, and Mrs. Dayles read it.

Then Tom called him.

There was a hoarse, struggling “Yes, I will come.” He grasped the kindly hand and left her.

XXXIII

CHANGES AND FORECASTS

THE young people and Mrs. Dayles sat together one evening in the library. The day had been full of surprises. Advices had come from California. Affairs there had gone so prosperously that Mr. and Mrs. Draycott hoped to reach home early in September.

By this time the midsummer was waning, and those who watched closely could detect a slight lengthening of the evenings. Tidings had also been received from Vermont. One of those unlooked-for crises in domestic affairs had occurred which made Mrs. Dayles's presence of great importance at this juncture. It had been decided that she should return home for a fortnight. A serving-woman, capable and trusty, had meanwhile been secured.

Dorothy had been rather aghast at the idea of Mrs. Dayles going away. She was quite aware, though she was titular mistress of Red Knolls, Mrs. Dayles supplied the real managing force. There was to be no more pretty masquerading now. She must take the household reins into young, unused hands. Tom insisted half earnestly, half jocosely, that the house would soon be tumbling about their ears.

The return of the parents, an event so definitely arranged now, so near at hand, so joyful an anticipation, still lent a tinge of seriousness to the talk, as is apt to be the case when a long, eventful experience is about to close.

"It was an immense experiment, setting such a pair as you and I, Tom, at the head of Red Knolls. Papa and mamma felt it so too; but they regarded it as a choice of evils. It seems as though I had grown years older since they went away."

"No doubt your family cares and responsibilities have worn you to the shadow I see before me; while my own burdens in the same line, added to my unceasing anxieties on your account, have reduced me to the wreck you behold!"

Tom rose and stood with mock seriousness before his sister, his sinewy frame drawn to its full height.

Dorothy's merry glance went over the big fellow.

"Your burdens! your anxieties!" she repeated. "As though they had weighed a feather with such a careless, obstinate, hare-brained creature as you!"

"I might make a crushing retort, but desist from sheer amiability of nature. Aunt Dayles, we are pluming ourselves on our good behavior, and talking as though we had carried Red Knolls on our shoulders, while you sit here without a word, and are perfectly conscious you have been all these months smoothing the rough edges, pouring oil on the raging seas. When the time comes to dispense

favours and honors, we ought to lay all ours at your feet."

Dorothy turned now and smiled gratefully on the little woman, who smiled back in turn.

"I should have no use for favours and honors, Tom, if I deserved them."

"I suppose," Dorothy continued, "that rough edges and raging seas are Tom's metaphors for sharp tongues and hot tempers. But the perils are mostly passed now. I think, considering what we are, we have borne the test remarkably well. You and I haven't quarrelled, have we, Tom, on an average oftener than once a day?"

"I should say not."

"And of course, after all these months, there is no fear but we shall hold out three or four weeks longer."

At this point they burst into the laughter of gay young hearts; but Mrs. Dayles said to herself, —

"O my dear boy and girl, don't feel too certain! So much can happen in three or four weeks!"

In a little while the talk had turned on the guests of two evenings ago. Each of the three had some cherished plan regarding them.

"Daisy must go to the kindergarten next winter," said Dorothy. "What a new world it will unfold to that bright, eager little brain!"

"As for Duke," subjoined Tom, "I have made up my mind he shall attend an evening-school, and have

various other chances to improve himself. It is an outrage that such a fellow as he should be handicapped all his life for want of an education. What I can't do in this matter the *pater* must."

"I have been thinking," added Dorothy, "papa and mamma might adopt Daisy, if we suggested it; only we couldn't take her away from Dake."

"No; that is not to be thought of," commented Tom decidedly.

At this point Mrs. Dayles declared her intention of having the two visit her in the early autumn.

"Dake shall have his vacation with me," she said. "Daisy will be as happy about the old place as the day is long."

Just before they parted for the night Dorothy went to her brother, laid her hand on his shoulder, and said;—

"O Tom, you and I are to be all alone together! We will be good to each other."

"Yes, Dollikins, dear old girl, we will!" He tweaked the little ear half affectionately, half playfully.

What a happy evening that had been! They remembered it afterward.

XXXIV

SOME PAINFUL SURPRISES

AUNT GLENN had come ! It was only the second day after Mrs. Dayles had left.

The lady's advent took everybody by surprise. She was Donald Draycott's only sister, and a couple of years his senior.

Glennis Draycott Grayling was a strikingly handsome woman. She carried her slender figure — perhaps a little too tall — with perfect grace. She was a blonde ; her complexion still retained the fairness of its youth, her blue eyes much of their young brightness of color. Her features had an almost faultless regularity, and the light frosts which had fallen among her yellow hair harmonized with her whole presence.

This visit had been a sudden impulse on her part. She was in the habit of acting on one. She did not, however, often come to Red Knolls. When she did, it was rather perfunctorily, for a brief holiday visit, or on some formal occasion when she felt it incumbent on her to emphasize the family relationship.

Mrs. Grayling's home was in Western New York. Her husband, many years her senior, was absorbed in

his business aims and interests, where he had made a conspicuous success. They had no children to brighten either their elegant city or country homes ; but there was little of the maternal quality in Glennis Grayling's make-up. She had vast social ambitions, and her husband's wealth enabled her to gratify these to the top of her bent. She had a knack of off-hand, brilliant, witty speech, at which people laughed, but were more or less afraid of her ; for the smart speeches could sting.

Glennis Draycott had lost her mother when she was herself barely thirteen. From that time the girl had no strong, restraining influence around her young life. She grew up proud, brilliant, self-willed. Her father doted on his handsome daughter, was more or less blind to her faults, and indulged her caprices. A man of his quality was sure, sooner or later, to see his mistake and deplore it when it could not be undone. His son Donald was unlike his sister in person and character ; but he was an affectionate, lovable fellow, and Glennis cared more for him than she did for anything else in the world. Accustomed by force of will or adroit management to have her own way, she had no doubt she could shape his destiny. Not long after her marriage, she set her heart on Donald's wedding a handsome girl, — a wealthy heiress, a friend of her own.

But Grace Dabney had spoiled all that. It was the cruelest disappointment of Mrs. Grayling's life.

She had to bear it silently too. Donald was the only person in the world whom she feared; and she knew the absolute hopelessness of attempting to oppose him where his affections were involved.

But this was not all. The two women were so utterly unlike in their characters and standards, that they could have few sympathies in common.

Mrs. Grayling proved her adroitness by the fact that during all these years neither her brother nor his wife suspected her aversion to their marriage. When they met, Glennis treated her sister-in-law with un-failing cordiality; and the latter tried to disguise from herself the traits in Mrs. Grayling which her keen woman's intuition could not fail to penetrate.

When the brother and sister were alone together Mrs. Grayling forced herself to listen smilingly to Donald's adoring praise of his wife. But the talk galled. She cherished a resentful feeling that he must always be drawing contrasts between his wife and his sister.

Time did not soften her sense of having been checkmated. Grace Dabney was, to her sister-in-law, a living reminder of the one great defeat, the cruellest disappointment, of her life. An added offence was Mrs. Draycott herself—the woman she was in person and character so abundantly justifying her husband's choice. The perfect sympathy of married life which she witnessed at Red Knolls seemed to Mrs. Grayling a tacit reproach for something she

missed in her own prosperous and what she regarded as humdrum existence.

A woman of this type would be likely to cherish a secret grudge against life as something which had disappointed and disenchanted her.

Dorothy was aghast at her aunt's advent. The prospect of being hostess to this elegant woman was very formidable to the young girl, and the absence of Mrs. Dayles at this juncture was particularly unfortunate.

Still, Aunt Glenn was her father's sister. Dorothy felt it incumbent on herself to represent her mother, and to do the honors of Red Knolls handsomely.

In reality, the girl had very vague notions of her aunt. She had not seen her for more than two years, and associated her with family dinners and formal occasions, with the ceremonious, decorative side of life in general.

It is doubtful whether Mrs. Grayling had any clearly defined purpose in this sudden descent upon Red Knolls during the absence of its master and mistress. She was restless of late years, and subject to frequent whims and impulses, which abundant leisure enabled her to gratify. She probably formulated no distinct plan of making anybody unhappy; but she brought with her a good many secret grudges and resentments, and a perfect opportunity was now afforded her for indulging them.

For two or three days things went on with hardly a jar. Aunt Glenn was gracious and amusing. The servants rose to the occasion. Dorothy felt she was doing herself credit.

Tom had, at first, been anything but hilarious over his aunt's arrival. He could, however, sympathize only partially with his sister's feeling of domestic responsibility.

"If my lady puts on airs, don't give them a thought," he said, trying to reassure his sister in his good-natured, masculine fashion. "What inspired her to jump on us at this crisis in full armor — maid and mammoth trunks — I can't conceive; but here she is, and we must make the best of it. Then, if she isn't satisfied, she can fold her tents and quietly steal away."

But Aunt Glenn soon succeeded in making herself agreeable to her nephew. She could do this always to men of all degrees, when she thought it worth her while. She amused and stimulated them with her piquant talk, her keen observations, her sparkling repartee, and lively witticisms. She liked men, too, better than she did her own sex. Then she had always regarded Tom as a Draycott. This, with her, was a strong point in his favor.

Dorothy, Mrs. Grayling had decided, was a Dabney — "her mother all over!"

The girl unconsciously aggravated this offence by talking much of Mrs. Draycott. She was always

quoting her mother's opinions and sayings, in a way that implied there could be no appeal from these. This secretly irritated her aunt. She could, of course, resent nothing at the moment, but she would bide her time.

Dorothy began to feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, at first in a vague, confused, sub-conscious way.

"I am sure she does not laugh at Tom's speeches in that fashion," she said to herself, half hurt, half indignant. "It is only at something *I* have said or done."

Then there were jests—light, playful, flashing things—aimed at Dorothy; but they were often barbed with a sting.

At times, and these were often, when Aunt Glenn beamed graciously on her niece, Dorothy would believe she had done her injustice, and would feel ashamed and remorseful; but these suspicions were sure to return, and before long they had gained the force of convictions.

Dorothy did not confide these to Tom. For one reason or another, they were not much alone together at this time. When he was in the house, Aunt Glenn made rather a point of monopolizing her nephew. It was an easy task for the woman of the world to adapt herself to him, to listen admiringly to his talk, to flatter him in a thousand subtle ways. In a little while the haughty, brilliant woman had woven her spells about the youth—spells which

had proven powerful to men of more than twice nineteen.

Worst of all, it began to seem to Dorothy that Tom was, in some subtle way, changed toward herself. Her own Tom! At first Dorothy tried to resist this thought indignantly. The change was of the sort on which one could not lay a finger. It was subtle; it was impalpable; it was in the air.

Mrs. Grayling had her own way of making her niece feel uncomfortable. With a few jesting words and a low ironical laugh she would set something Dorothy had said or done in a ludicrous or ridiculous light.

She was not wise, of course, this girl of seventeen, and constantly played into the elder woman's hands. It never entered her mind that her greatest offence was being her mother's daughter.

As time went on Dorothy was forced to see more and more the effect of Mrs. Grayling's presence and influence on her nephew. He began to affect smart speeches, to be critical, witty, fastidious, and in various ways to assume more or less the air of a man of the world. This was wholly foreign to his frank, off-hand, impetuous nature.

One evening when Mrs. Grayling and her nephew were playing at backgammon, Dorothy, sitting near them, was rather shocked at one of Tom's remarks, in the temper of a good many others which he had made of late.

"How could you speak like that, Tom? You know mamma would not approve of it," she burst out.

Mrs. Grayling seized her chance. She laughed her amused, satirical laugh.

"My dear Dorothy, that is the way, of course, to keep him in the strait and narrow path. Threaten him with his mother's displeasure every time!"

Tom flushed, and turned angrily on his sister,—

"I do wish you would stop harping on that string! It would do for a small boy, but it gets to be insufferable when a fellow has grown up."

Aunt Glenn also took occasion, when the mood prompted, to let other people perceive she regarded her niece still in the light of an immature girl, whose ideas and opinions—to be indulged of course—were really entitled to slight consideration. She managed in subtle ways to convey this impression to the servants and to guests. Dorothy, installed mistress of the house, was naturally sensitive for her dignity. She was hurt, indignant, helpless.

Sometimes, too, Mrs. Grayling related amusing stories of slips of girls who took on airs and assumed womanly dignities and responsibilities when they ought still to be quietly sheltered under the maternal wing.

The stories were told in a dramatic way, which made people laugh. Of course Dorothy laughed too. She could not assume anything was pointed at herself. Aunt Glenn would have stared, innocent and

amazed, at the suggestion. But all the same her stories rankled.

Her aunt's speeches, too, often pained the girl's conscience. Mrs. Grayling held up the failings, weaknesses, misfortunes, of people whom she knew in remorseless lights. Anything of this sort was alien to the family atmosphere, to the influences and examples amid which Dorothy had been reared. What would her mother think? As for the daughter, she could only sit still; but the young face showed plainly its pain and discomfort, which only provoked Mrs. Grayling to further efforts on the same lines. "I have seen Grace Dabney look just like that!" she said to herself; and the haughty woman, who loved power and was used to exercising it, remembered how she had been forced to close her lips and be on her guard in the presence of Donald's wife.

Things grew worse and worse with Dorothy. She was getting positively unhappy. Yet the strong, in-born forces of her nature rallied to meet this new ordeal. It would be a lasting disgrace to have a quarrel with Aunt Glenn, her guest, her father's sister, a woman whose years almost trebled her own. Besides, Dorothy had an instinct that she would certainly be worsted if it came to a collision between the two. Sometimes it seemed to the girl that Mrs. Grayling was bent on provoking her into an explosion of passion; then, again, her mood would change to something so soft and gracious that Dorothy

would wonder whether she had not been unjust to her aunt.

"I shall be glad when she goes," the girl often said to herself, with some pain in her young face which no one had ever surprised there before. "To think she is papa's sister, and he is fond of her! He often talks of the days when they were boy and girl together, here at Red Knolls; and she was devoted to him after grandma died. He always ends, though, with something like this, 'Glenn and I were as unlike in character and temperament as though we had no drop of kindred blood in our veins, and the years are not making us less so.' If he were here, she would not dare treat me in this way. But now," her lips quivered, "there is nobody to help me."

For a spirit of blindness seemed to have fallen on Tom Draycott. It was a part of Mrs. Grayling's *rôle* to make herself agreeable and charming to her nephew; and she thoroughly succeeded.

One day Dorothy entered the sitting-room with a new hat which had just been sent from the milliner's. It was a pretty thing, of fine, light straw, the trimmings a cluster of moss rosebuds blended with some loops and knots of gay-colored ribbons. Tom and his aunt were there together; he had been laughing heartily over some of her stories.

That morning he had said to his sister, "Aunt Glenn is a wonderfully clever creature, and keeps a

fellow alive and amused. We must do our best to have her stay on at Red Knolls."

Dorothy wore her new hat. It was very becoming to the glowing young face it surmounted.

"Isn't it a beauty?" She addressed the two with girlish eagerness. "I wore it down just to have you admire it."

A couple of hours before, Dorothy had unconsciously made some remark at lunch which nettled her aunt. This was her chance for reprisal.

"Dear me, what a gorgeous affair it is!" she exclaimed after a moment's inspection. "Your milliner must have stolen a clipping from some rainbow."

Mrs. Grayling's taste was exquisite. Her soft blues and lavenders were perfectly adapted to her blond fairness. There was never a false note of color in her gowns.

This gave her dictum weight, and relegated the hat to hopeless garishness in the eyes of her nephew.

"Dorothy, why will you make such a popinjay of yourself?" he exclaimed in an irritated tone. "I hope you will have too good taste to show yourself on the street with such a varicolored topknot."

Dorothy had a young girl's sensitiveness to ridicule. All her pleasure in her new hat was spoiled.

"I think you might have manners enough, Tom Draycott, not to call names! You certainly never learned that habit from your mother!"

She turned and left the room.

"Poor Dorothy!" Mrs. Grayling's tone was half sympathetic, half amused. "Of course she is only a child still; and I think, Tom, my dear, you were rather hard on her. But that holding up mamma to you on all occasions, as though you were still under nursery discipline, is vastly amusing, when one sees just what a big, broad-shouldered fellow you are."

Dorothy, returning to her room, tossed her hat on the table, and flung herself on the lounge.

"It is all *her* doings," she said in angry monologue. "Tom would have liked my hat if she had not spoiled it with that light, subtle sneer. Oh, what shall I do? I cannot bear it much longer. Even Tom is not the same to me. He does not know it, and it is all owing to her influence. O Aunt Glenn, I shall get to hating you!"

She buried her face in the lounge cushion and sobbed passionately.

Two days afterward another jar occurred between the young people. It happened at dinner, and, of course, in Mrs. Grayling's presence. Whenever Tom's critical, captious mood cropped out toward his sister, she laid the trouble at his aunt's door. The girl herself was getting into a self-conscious, morbid mood amid the perplexities and trials which beset her.

But to-night all that had slipped away. Some slight misadventure on the street had awakened all her girlish sense of the ridiculous. A woman had

run against and nearly upset her on the street. As the recollection flashed over Dorothy, and the manner in which each had recovered her balance, she related the scene as a girl would, with picturesque detail, with ripples of laughter, and eyes flashing with merriment. She described the stranger with whom she had collided as “a rather adipose, rather bedizened person, who looked as though she might on slight occasion become belligerent.”

In ordinary moods Tom would have listened and laughed too, and probably have helped his sister on with the fun.

“How you do spread your adjectives!” he exclaimed, now seizing a chance to make a smart rejoinder before Mrs. Grayling. “Look out, Dorothy, or you will be a prim, polysyllabic old maid one of these days.”

Aunt Glenn laughed the low, ironical laugh which always grated on her niece’s nerves.

“Oh, that is delicious, Tom!” she cried. “Why don’t you add pious? The three p’s will then make your alliteration perfect.”

Dorothy’s eyes flashed. “I think a Sophomore who has a weakness for airing his Greek and mythology should not take upon himself to criticise me.”

The shaft struck through a vulnerable point in Tom’s armor. The blood rushed angrily to his cheeks. Mrs. Grayling noticed it, and mentally commented, —

"It is nuts to me when Grace Dabney's boy and girl have a tiff, and show they are made of common stuff, despite their paragon of a mother!"

But Dorothy's feeling of triumph was short lived. It was all she could do to keep back the tears from her eyes. It seemed as though that dinner would never end. Aunt Glenn beamed on Tom, and he laughed noisily at her repartees, and had a feeling of angry estrangement toward his sister.

Yet you and I know, reader, for all this exhibition of temper and youthful conceit, what stuff Tom Draycott had behind them. Mrs. Grayling might play upon his young weakness and vanities; she could but sound the lowest note — not the top of his compass.

There was something in the air of Red Knolls which might lead to an explosion. Mrs. Grayling would, of course, have laughed at this idea. She had a sense of triumph in these days which at times amounted to vindictive exultation.

It is only just, however, to say she would have repelled the idea to her own soul that she could ever desire any harm to Donald's children.

But she was dealing with young, sensitive, high-strung natures, and might reckon without her host.

One afternoon Mrs. Grayling and her niece were in the drawing-room receiving some calls. The former was in one of her brilliant moods. They had been discussing some mutual acquaintances who had gone to live in her vicinity.

"Their grandeur is quite dazzling," she said in a half-scornful, half-derisive tone. "They have managed to worm themselves into our best set. But they are parvenues for all that, and it crops out occasionally. That is not, however, perhaps the worst. It strikes me there was some scandal or crime associated with certain members of the family. Didn't one of the brothers make a sudden flight across seas, or was it to Canada?"

A laugh in which a fine ear could have detected something conscious and perfunctory, ran around the circle. The lady sitting next to Dorothy, a pretty, elaborately dressed brunette, stirred uneasily and flushed; Dorothy's olive skin was scarlet.

At this instant Hidalgo appeared at the door. He did not often affect the drawing-room, but his appearance struck Dorothy now in the light of a providential interposition.

"Come in, you huge quadruped," she cried, seizing the chance to effect a happy diversion, "and show your splendid self to the ladies!"

The guests had barely made their adieus when Dorothy broke out, —

"O Aunt Glenn! what have you said? But of course you could not know."

"Know what, Dorothy?" Mrs. Grayling repeated with either real or simulated surprise.

"I mean what you said about parvenues and the brother's running away. Mrs. Leydell's brother did the same thing."

“Oh, I understand now! But I knew perfectly, child. I intended my small arrow should hit the mark.”

Then the tongue which, in certain of her moods, loved to sting and lash, went on, —

“I never particularly fancied the Leydells; and when people’s heads get slightly turned by their prosperity, I do enjoy taking them down.”

“But it was nothing the sister could help, Aunt Glenn,” pleaded Dorothy, too shocked to be indignant. “You surely could not want to pain her by reminding her of a family misfortune!”

Mrs. Grayling flushed slightly under her blond skin; but she determined to carry things with a high hand. She laughed her little hard, scornful laugh.

“I don’t pretend to any saintliness, Dorothy, my dear. You must have found that out already. I had my chance; I seized it. It has done no harm, and reminded some people that after all their airs they live in glass houses.”

Dorothy sat silent, gazing at her aunt. Something grew in the gaze which could not have been pleasant for the proud woman.

Then the tumult of young, passionate indignation flashed from heart to lip, —

“It was cruel! It was shameful! O Aunt Glenn, you must be a wicked woman!”

Mrs. Grayling grew very white. She turned on her niece eyes which burned like live coals.

"How dare you speak to me like that? You are just like your mother!"

The last sentence was hissed out. The feeling which had rankled so long in Glennis Grayling's heart was in her face, in her voice.

Then, with a flashing sense that she had lost her self-control, she rose and left the room.

Dorothy had seen the look in her aunt's eyes. It started a train of thought which fairly dazed her.

"She looked, she spoke, as though she hated mamma! What would Tom have thought if he had seen her?"

Half an hour later, when her young passion had subsided, Dorothy was saying to herself, —

"She is my aunt, my guest, so much older than I; I owe her an apology for my words. I must bend my pride to it. The sooner it is over, too, the better."

She went straight to Mrs. Grayling's room.

"Aunt Glenn, I have come to ask you to excuse me. I should not have spoken as I did just now."

Mrs. Grayling was too acute not to perceive the limits of her niece's apology. Dorothy would not wrong her conscience by saying her words were not true.

Her aunt was, however, inclined to receive the apology in apparent good faith. Her reflections during the last half-hour had not been quite reassuring. They would have been less so had she been fully

conscious of the tone and look which had accented her remark about Dorothy's mother.

When Aunt Glenn attempted to do anything it would not be by halves.

"O Dorothy dear!" she said in a cordial, half-playful tone, "you did not suppose I thought of that a second time! What you said was all my fault too. But you look so pretty, child, so much like your mother, as I said, when you are a little excited, that I can't resist the temptation of seeing you so occasionally. Of course that is all very shocking, I know; but, really, I don't enjoy hurting people's feelings, and when I say very cruel things, you must believe I don't half mean them."

"I shall always try to believe that, Aunt Glenn," Dorothy replied, greatly relieved by the gracious manner, and half inclined to think what she had heard was true.

XXXV

A CLIMAX

DURING the next two days nothing occurred to break the household calm. Perhaps it might have had to one acquainted with all the characters concerned a little the nature of an armed truce.

Aunt Glenn and Dorothy were on their guard. Tom was absent a good deal on some short yachting sails; and his sister, hurt at his lack of comprehension and sympathy at this time, kept her troubles to herself.

Aunt Glenn had not forgotten nor forgiven. That was not easy to her proud, exacting nature. She did not allow her feeling to appear; but the scene in the drawing-room — the shocked look in Dorothy's face — the words she had spoken — frequently came up to Mrs. Grayling, and chafed her imperious spirit.

The relations between Tom Draycott and his sister underwent at this crisis a more prolonged and serious strain than had ever occurred in their lives. Neither of the young people was clearly conscious of this; neither was on guard. If at a juncture when there were some irritation and sensitiveness on both sides, any fresh cause of offence should bring matters to a

head, Mrs. Grayling would know how to make her account in it.

One afternoon when Dorothy had gone to a tennis-party in the neighborhood, Tom appeared at the stable-door, and ordered Steve to saddle old Ironsides in a hurry.

The young man was greatly annoyed to learn that the horse had sprained his ankle that morning, and it would not be safe to use him for two or three days.

Tom fumed about the stalls. He glanced several times at Sphinx, freshly groomed and in perfect condition, eager for drive or mount.

"She has not been out to-day, has she, Steve?" he asked the good-natured, broad-faced young Englishman who combined his stable duties with various indoor service at Red Knolls.

"No, Mr. Tom, and she's achin' for a smart gallop. She'd make double-quick time on the road this afternoon."

Tom stood still at the stall and surveyed the beautiful creature, with her small head, her rich dark satiny hide, her bright glancing eyes. He was engaged to ride that afternoon with one of his classmates. They would probably go to Concord. The meeting-place had been appointed. Moments were precious. Tom debated with himself a short time.

He knew perfectly that Sphinx was Dorothy's most precious possession. It was tacitly understood that nobody was to take her out without her young mis-

tress's permission. The treatment of that young mare was always a very sensitive point with his sister.

"Miss Dorothy is out, I think you said, Steve?" Tom asked again.

"Yes; she went out half an hour ago, sir."

"And she left no orders about the horse when she left?"

"No, Mr. Tom; though she will be likely to have a drive later in the afternoon."

Tom's debate ultimated. "Well, as old Ironsides is knocked up, and my sister is away, there seems nothing to be done but take the risks myself. I'll treat the little beast carefully. Put her into the saddle lively, Steve!"

More than two hours later Tom rode into the stable. Those two hours had been the hardest of Sphinx's life. The little thoroughbred which had pranced gayly off with arching crest, every fibre in her perfect body a-quiver with joyous life, came now with drooping crest, her flanks lathered with foam, her mouth dripping spume.

Tom shouted eagerly for Steve. In a moment the man appeared at the stable-door, giving a grunt of dismay at sight of Sphinx's plight.

"Yes, I know, Steve!" Tom answered the crest-fallen look as he bounded from the mare's back. "Be spry now; get to work, and rub her down with a vengeance!"

"But what have you been doin to her, Master Tom?" with an indignant note in his voice as he removed the saddle and patted the lathered coat.

"Oh, I put her at her paces harder than I intended. Reynolds proposed a race, and I went in for it. We and the beasts got our blood up; I didn't realize how far we were going or how hot the day was. That is all there is of it. You don't imagine I have done any mischief, do you?"

"I hope not, sir. But I wouldn't advise you to try it again;" and he shook his head. "This sort of work never does a horse of her breed any good."

It would have been a relief if Steve could have sworn at his young master.

"Dorothy would be awfully cut up if she were to catch Sphinx in this plight," continued Tom, with real concern for his sister. "Good heavens! what a storm there would be! Do your best, Steve, with the mare, and don't lose an instant."

But the man had already set to work with a will.

Tom hurried to the house in order to intercept his sister if she should return, and to manage "by hook or by crook to keep her from the stable for the next hour."

He had disappeared only a short time when his sister turned at the back of the grounds into a lane which afforded a short cut to the stable. She paused to gather some ripening apples from a low branch which bent over the wall. These were intended for

Sphinx. She would tell Steve to have her at the door in a quarter of an hour.

In less than that time Dorothy burst into the sitting-room where Tom had stretched himself on the lounge, and was listening for her footsteps on the front piazza, not suspecting she would approach the house from the back side. When he saw the white face, the blazing eyes, he was certain she had anticipated him.

"Tom Draycott," she cried, her voice tremulous with passion, "you have killed my horse!"

Her manner, her words, put him at once on angry defence. He rose rather leisurely from the sofa.

"Don't make a fool of yourself!" he retorted. "I haven't done her any harm."

"How dare you look me in the face and say that? To sneak into the stable when I was away, and take my horse, and race her for hours this hot afternoon! I have just come from the stable; I have seen Sphinx; I made Steve tell me all. It was dishonorable; it was contemptible; it was cowardly!" Her voice gathered fresh passion at every sentence; but it came near breaking into a sob as she went on. "My beautiful Sphinx! You have ruined her!"

Tom had grown white. Such adjectives had never been hurled at the high-spirited youth. They stung sharper because, unjust and exaggerated as they were, Dorothy certainly had great provocation.

But Tom had not been in a mood of late to make

allowances for his sister. He tossed and caught his book in a way that was designedly aggravating before he spoke.

"As you are in such a rage you must have your temper out, I suppose. Turning yourself into a vi-rago and calling names may do you good and me no special harm; but I don't crave such scenes, and I don't choose to explain or justify myself while you are in this tantrum."

"I am not surprised you take refuge in lofty airs and grand talk, as you can have no possible excuse for what you have done. Oh, I wish papa were here! But I can defend myself, Tom Draycott."

"So I perceive," sneered Tom. All the time he was conscious he had been to blame less in taking Sphinx out than in racing her so mercilessly.

Dorothy was getting exhausted betwixt her grief over Sphinx and her anger at Tom. She struggled for self-mastery, for some last words which might leave her at least mistress of the situation.

"I have no more to say now, except that Sphinx belongs solely to me; and, if she should recover from your cruel treatment, you are never, under any circumstances, to take her from the stall again."

"You may be sure I shall never wish to do it," retorted Tom.

At that instant the portières at one end of the apartment moved softly apart, and Mrs. Grayling stood between them, a charming picture; her blond

hair and complexion in admirable relief against her lavender gown of some fine summer fabric.

"My dear children," she exclaimed, in her most gracious manner, "but isn't this getting to be painfully near a family quarrel?"

Dorothy felt a sick thrill go through her strained nerves. That graceful, smiling presence seemed baleful to her.

Tom, disgusted and mortified, holding Dorothy largely responsible in the case, replied with flushed face and angry tone, —

"It is what I should call a decided family row, and no credit, certainly, to either of the parties engaged in it."

"Dorothy, my dear," said the light, jesting voice, "you make me think of Petruchio's Kate, with those flushed cheeks and those blazing eyes. I must confess it looks dangerously like eavesdropping on my part; but I only entered the alcove a few moments ago, and took for granted the talk, with such a model brother and sister, you know, was merely a play at quarrelling. When I found it was something serious, and could get my breath, I resolved to interfere."

"I have nothing to say for myself, Aunt Glenn; and Tom is equal, certainly, to giving you his version of the matter," replied Dorothy, and she left the room with considerable dignity.

But it all collapsed the moment she reached her chamber. She walked back and forth, wringing her

hands, her soul in a tumult of anger, mortification, remorse.

"Oh, what have I said! And Aunt Glenn heard it all, and enjoyed it too. I saw it in her eyes. And my poor Sphinx is ruined, and Tom and I have quarrelled irretrievably. He could forgive anything but my calling him a coward. Such a proud fellow never forgets that. I wonder if I am the wickedest girl in the world, as I certainly am the unhappiest?"

The tumult of heart and brain broke down soon in a storm of sobs.

Tom Draycott, in a decidedly unpleasant frame of mind, was left with his aunt, who graciously took a seat by his side.

"I am immensely mortified, Aunt Glenn, that you should have been annoyed by an affair of this sort," he began.

"O my dear boy, don't give the matter a second thought," she interrupted lightly. "It will never weigh a feather with me. Of course Dorothy carries a high hand with us all; but then, what can you expect of seventeen, especially when it is so fascinatingly pretty? I imagine, too, you were not absolutely blameless about Sphinx. I know what high-headed young fellows like you are when they get astride a handsome little beast. Of course you raced her remorselessly. Come, now! Clear up your forehead, and let's have a game of backgammon before supper."

XXXVI

YOUNG LIFE LOOKING DEATH IN THE FACE

DURING their afternoon ride young Draycott and his friend, Joe Reynolds, had agreed to have a row down the harbor the following day.

Reynolds was a jolly, good-hearted fellow, ruddy complexioned, sandy haired, with a glimmer of fun in his honest light-gray eyes. He was a muscular, strong-built youth, used to handling an oar or reefing a sail. He was a kind of amphibious creature, and his passion for all sorts of light sailing-craft had interfered with his college work. He and Tom Draycott had a class-liking for each other; and as Reynolds's summer home was on the South Shore, only a few miles from the city, the young men, though hardly intimates at Harvard, were more or less together during the vacation.

The harbor that summer afternoon was a scene of gay, varied, picturesque life, with its graceful yachts and pretty sailboats gleaming and dancing over the waves like huge snow-winged sea-birds. Then the vast crowd of larger shipping lying at the wharves or moving over the waters, and the big gray hulks of the steamers, gave variety, interest, and color to the whole picture.

The two young men stood on the pier, and gazed a few minutes on the animated scene before they leaped into the rowboat. Their hearts beat high with the pride and strength of young manhood. They seized their oars, swung them about their heads, and, in merry travesty of their short row, shouted together, "From City Point to Squantum!"

Then they buried their blades in the water, and the light shell bounded away like a live thing to their stroke.

As the young men started off in such gay trim, an old seaman, with his shaggy jacket, and tarpaulin a-tilt on his iron-gray hair, shouted out to them, —

"You better keep a sharp lookout on that eloud in the west, young men, or you'll be caught in a stiff gale before sunset."

The rowers glanced at the long, dark thunderous-looking reef which lay along the western horizon. But all around them the sunlight glittered bravely on blue, tumbling waves and snowy sails and slender masthead.

They nodded gayly to the sailor's warning.

"That old tar wants to send us off with a croak," remarked Reynolds airily.

"Or show off his nautical prescience," laughed Tom.

"Them young blades are in high feather now," muttered the sailor; "but they'll have a black squall

on 'em if they don't put in shore afore they're an hour older."

He cocked one eye aloft again, shook his head, and shambled off the float.

The young men bent to their rowing. Tom had the reputation of a fine Harvard oar in the class rows, and Reynolds was as much at home with all small sea-craft as he was in his own chamber. The little boat careened over the waves. The rack of cloud, of a singular greenish-black color, spread its wings toward the zenith. The classmates, absorbed in their oars and the delicious motion, had no thought for the swift-rising cloud. The darkness gloomed around them suddenly. The winds sprang up like furies that had broken their leash, and went raging over the waves. Fierce lightnings broke, and thunders roared. All the light shipping put in speedily to shore. The young men, alive to their peril now, strained every nerve to get under shelter.

A little later Reynolds lifted his voice over shrieking winds and plunging waves and volleying thunders, —

"Draycott, we are caught in a tornado, and we're out in Boston Harbor!"

"You're right, Reynolds!" Tom shouted back. "We will stick to the oars as long as we can hold them."

They had no strength to waste in words. Great livid waves opened their huge jaws to swallow that

light craft and the lives she carried. Winds roared and lashed the air. Hail rattled like grape-shot into the boat. The blackness grew denser; then all that wild welter would leap out sharp in the fierce lightnings, and the thunder would shake the world.

The boat went driving and stumbling on in the teeth of the gale. Their utmost efforts barely served thus far to keep her from capsizing. But how puny these were! How long could she hold out in such a tempest?

Tom Draycott was looking death in the face, and he knew it. It had come so suddenly! Less than an hour ago it had seemed that the strong young life throbbing in his pulses could never falter or wane; and now — he wondered vaguely whether, if he looked in the mirror, he should see an old man.

But for the most part young Draycott's thoughts were sharp and vivid. He knew there was every likelihood he should die in a few minutes, going down as others had gone, young and strong as he, — he had read about them, — in those hungry, clamoring waves.

And what a glorious thing life looked to him now — now that it was slipping away forever! Why had he not prized it more? How every commonplace moment seemed to him charged with gifts and meanings and blessedness! The fair endless procession of days and nights, the majestic march of the seasons,

the far, arching sky, and near, green earth,—how ineffably beautiful and divine all these grew to him now! As he looked back, he seemed to himself moving dull and vacuous, as a beast might, amid all the splendor and glory which the past had caught as it was vanishing.

Yet he had meant to leave his mark on the world, to do some brave service for his day and generation. And to die like this, in the very dawn of manhood, with all its high hopes, purposes, aspirations, unfulfilled!

An instant later his thoughts leaped to Red Knolls. Everything was swallowed up in that. Oh, the dear old home! The threshold he would never cross again! The familiar roof he would see no more behind the elms!

When it came to his mother, Tom's thoughts turned away; they could not face that breaking heart. The bitterness of death had come now.

There was his father, too, whose strong, tender manhood would gird itself for the sake of others, but who would go mourning to the grave for his drowned boy. And Dorothy! All the old happy days of their childhood, the frolics, the foolish quarrels, the makings-up, crowded back on his memory.

And every careless word, every angry temper, especially the things which had happened in these last days, came up to reproach him mightily. He took all the blame to himself; he had been cruel to

that young sister. She would remember when the knowledge had come, when the shadow which would never lift had fallen upon Red Knolls. If he could only put his arm about her for one last minute, and say, —

“Don’t think about it, Dollikins! It was all my fault!”

His cheek was wet now with something besides the salt dashing of the spray.

And amid these dearest home-loves, others came to him. There were his classmates. How cut up the fellows would be when they knew! There were hearts, too, who would carry a silent, empty room all their days for his sake, — Nanty Dayles, and John Amoury and his wife.

Dake Cramley came up too. What a stunning blow it would be to that poor fellow! It comforted Tom to think he and Daisy would not go unfriended. For his own sake the two would always be dear to the father and mother and Dorothy.

There were other thoughts, too, which went out into the great Unknown that was drawing so close. When all that *could* die was lying silent and motionless, on what mysterious life, what new plane of existence, would the indestructible Self have entered? Would there be some great, overpowering surprise, or would the new day rise slowly, peacefully, like the dawns of this world? Would he forget everything else in the wonder of the change? Would the old

memories ever come back? Or would they be swallowed up in a great blank like that which veils the beginnings of all human lives? The swift-flashing questions which rose in his thoughts were the questions which reach the deepest soundings of human souls. Tom Draycott tried to trust his future with the infinite Love and Care which had been about him all his life, which he felt now were around all human lives.

All this time the boat had been plunging before the gale, shuddering down into great abysses of seas, then shouldered by some towering wave, on the crest of which she rocked and quivered. Oar and rudder were useless now. There was nothing to do but cling to the boat and wait.

Suddenly Tom heard a voice above the clamor, —

"Draycott, I don't think she can stand it much longer."

"I'm afraid not, Reynolds; but when it comes we'll go down together."

"I'd like to take your hand once more and hear you say good-by."

They reached amid the blackness and the howling for each other's hands.

"Good-by, Reynolds! Say a prayer for me, as I shall for you."

The boat slipped, quivering, shuddering, into the wide green trough of sea. But a little later she rode on another crest of wave.

The blackness seemed to lighten by a shade.

After a little a voice which young Draycott never expected to hear again, shouted, —

“I think we are off Savin Hill, and we are driving straight on shore.”

The tornado, after the nature of tornadoes, must be brief.

XXXVII

WHERE WAS TOM?

DOROTHY DRAYCOTT had had the most restless, unhappy day of her life.

The first thing she did after breakfast was to visit the stable, where she found matters decidedly improved. Steve thought Sphinx would, with rest and proper care, come out all right, though another such race would be her undoing.

Dorothy lavished caresses and sugar on Sphinx for a half-hour before she returned to the house. But all her satisfaction over the mare could not stifle a feeling that something was wrong at the heart of things.

Mrs. Grayling had gone to the city that morning, and Tom had left soon after breakfast. Neither at that meal nor at dinner the night before, at which Dorothy had forced herself to be present, had there been any allusion to the affairs of the afternoon.

Aunt Glenn had, with her usual adroitness, relieved the tension between the young people by her agreeable talk at table. As Dorothy's anxiety about Sphinx was largely dissipated, she could reflect more calmly on what had occurred the previous

day. Some of her speeches reproached her conscience. "Of course she had been greatly aggravated, but she had gone too far. Some time she would admit this to Tom, when Aunt Glenn had gone and they were alone together."

Dorothy tried to drown her thoughts in some songs at the piano, in her drawings, in a walk outdoors, in a romp with Hidalgo; but nothing quite served. The world can sometimes seem stale, flat, and unprofitable even to seventeen.

Aunt Glenn returned in the early afternoon, and, tired by the heat, had her lunch served in her room.

The tornado which burst upon Boston Harbor spread its black wings inland, and darkened over Red Knolls. The tempest broke there with swift lightning-bolts, volleys of thunder, and fierce winds that scourged the trees and shrubbery, and sent clouds of hailstones rattling against the windows.

Dorothy was a brave girl, but she never remembered a tempest like this. She was all alone too, pacing her room, her nerves shrinking at each red glare of lightning, each deafening crash of thunder. She shrank from going to Aunt Glenn, even in her fright and solitude; and it did not become the mistress of Red Knolls to resort to her servants for the courage she ought rather to inspire.

So Dorothy's young brain reasoned as she tried to brace herself against her fears. All at once a low,

wailing cry broke from her lips. She stood still as though one of those fiery lightning-bolts had struck her.

"Was Tom out in Boston Harbor? Had the tornado caught him?"

Mrs. Grayling had just finished her late lunch. She had drawn her chair away from the window. Though her nerves were constitutionally strong, she was beginning to be appalled by the fury of the tempest.

There was a quick knock at the door; and, before she could answer, her niece entered. In the semi-darkness Mrs. Grayling saw the white face, the scared eyes.

"Aunt Glenn, what does this mean?" cried Dorothy breathlessly.

"It means nothing less than a tornado, child. Will you sit down?"

"No, thank you, I can't," speaking in rapid, excited tones. She had drawn near the lady, and stood still. "Aunt Glenn, do you remember what Tom said at breakfast about going down the harbor?"

"Yes, I remember."

"But if he should be caught out in this storm" — she did not complete the sentence.

Mrs. Grayling looked startled. "Tom! Oh, I hope not!" she exclaimed sharply.

"He would be drowned, Aunt Glenn!"

The words were low, but Mrs. Grayling heard

them. At that instant some other words leaped into her memory. She heard the same young voice, stern with shocked surprise, calling her a "wicked woman." The speech, the tones, had, as we have seen, rankled in her memory ever since. They hardened her now.

Mrs. Grayling did not in her heart believe Tom was in peril. She took it for granted that if he had started out in the boat he would have sufficient warning of the approaching storm to put in shore.

But this visit to Red Knolls had, for various reasons, aroused all the bitterest feelings and memories of a nature not devoid of generous impulses and aspects. Dorothy's question—her evident alarm—had given Mrs. Grayling her chance. She thought only of that.

"I can hardly see what would save him if he should be out in the harbor in such a tempest. But I am going to be sensible and believe he is not," she replied quietly.

"But he is very rash; he would be likely to start if the storm were not on him. O Aunt Glenn!" the rapid voice full of agonized pleading, "how could we let him go?"

"Yes," returned Mrs. Grayling in her softest tones—tones which Dorothy's nerves had learned to shiver at, "it would, we must confess, have been wiser to face any possible storm of reproach than a tornado!"

"What do you mean, Aunt Glenn?"

"Oh, you must know, Dorothy! He told me last

night that he should not vex you again by riding Sphinx. He had made up his mind for a run out in the harbór to-day."

Dorothy shuddered through every fibre of her being. The darkness had deepened. Her aunt could not see the look on her face. The next words were words of life or death to Dorothy Draycott.

"But he said — at least I understood him — at breakfast, that he and Reynolds had arranged yesterday for a row down the harbor."

"Did he? Then I must have been mistaken. I gathered it was an afterthought on his part."

Aunt Glenn made herself believe she was telling the truth.

"Aunt Glenn, do you mean to say I am Tom's murderer?"

Mrs. Grayling moved uneasily. She had gone far enough.

"Nonsense, child! Don't go into hysterics. Of course I meant nothing of that sort. I have quite too much respect for Tom Draycott's wits to believe he would start out in a row-boat in a tornado. Ugh! This wind will bring the house about our ears!"

Dorothy turned and left the room without a word.

Aunt Glenn half rose to follow her niece. Then a blaze of lightning dazzled her eyes. She sat down amid the deafening thunder, and for the next ten or fifteen minutes was really too frightened to leave the

room. She concluded Dorothy would go straight to the servants, who would probably reassure her about Tom. She had herself no serious fears regarding her nephew's safety. "As for his sister, it would only do that saucy little minx good to have a scare."

As the storm abated, followed by a cooler temperature, Mrs. Grayling grew drowsy. She threw herself on the bed, and was soon fast asleep.

Dorothy went straight to her room. She huddled herself down on a corner of the lounge. She scarcely heeded the raging of the storm. Those fierce lightnings, those splitting thunders, though they were the crack of doom, mattered little now. Her brain, her heart, were full of one thought, one image, and that was Tom. If he should never come back again, if she had sent him, her big, splendid brother, to his death, what was left to care for? She sat still, the white tall girl; she did not faint nor shriek, because to do this was not in the Draycott blood; but she stared with great tearless eyes into the darkness. The future stretched before her long, solitary, hopeless. What would the days be without Tom? Would she hear his ringing step, his loud, joyous laugh, his eager call, no more, no more?

She thought of her father and mother's return; she and Tom had so often talked together of that moment. They had arranged to stand side by side in the front door as the carriage came up the drive.

Dorothy had a dreadful vision of herself standing in the wide doorway all alone — she who had murdered Tom! She might not speak the words, but when they looked in her eyes they would know.

For Dorothy, with the long-repressed tension of these days, with her irritated nerves and her excited imagination, was now in a dangerously morbid condition. The words she had spoken rose and filled all the air like reproachful voices. She put her fingers in her ears, but she heard still above all those crashing thunders. She would hear all her life! And Tom, in that row-boat out in the harbor, might be going down at that very moment! And those words had caused his death! Aunt Glenn would always think so; and she, Dorothy Draycott, would she not know it?

Once, in the midst of the storm, there was a knock at the door. It was opened softly, and a maid looked into the room. She was searching for her young mistress, herself terrified by the storm. In her excitement Dorothy neither saw nor heard. The maid did not perceive through the dimness the figure on a corner of the sofa. She took for granted that Dorothy had gone to her aunt.

The tornado passed away as tornadoes do, sweeping their black, low-trailing skirts from the summer sky. The wide air grew calm and sweet as though no winds had ever charged in wild fury through it; the storm-beaten earth shone once more, glad with leafage and bloom, in the sunshine.

But the girl still sat motionless on the lounge, with bright, dry eyes staring out of the white face. She did not know that the storm had passed, that the sun was shining all around her.

Where was Tom ?

XXXVIII

AFTER THE TORNADO

"DOROTHY, Dorothy!"

The voice rang loud, eager, imperative, through the house.

A moment later a door swung back, a pair of light feet glanced along the hall and down the staircase, and Dorothy Draycott stood before her brother.

He held her to his heart. The words he tried to speak died in his throat.

Dorothy spoke first. He would hardly have recognized that low, awesome, strained voice.

"Are you sure it is *you*, Tom?"

He looked in her white, drawn face, in her dry, staring eyes. What had happened to her?

All he had gone through during the last hours had been a terrible strain on soul and body. The winds had driven the boat straight on Savin Beach, and the young men were blown into the surf close to the shore. After a little while they staggered to their feet, and managed to drag themselves, drenched, dizzy, exhausted, to Reynolds's summer home, where the household was appalled at the appearance of the youths and their late peril, not having dreamed they were out in the storm.

Every attention and sympathy was, of course, lavished on the pair. Tom was, however, so consumed by a desire to reach Red Knolls, that nothing short of an exertion of physical force could have induced him to remain over night. After three hours' rest and refreshment he was driven to the station.

The brother and sister stared at each other with a kind of solemn curiosity and tenderness, as though a grave lay between them. By this time Tom began to perceive vaguely that something was the matter with Dorothy. Hardly able to stand himself, he, by sheer force of will, seized her in his arms, carried her up the stairs, and placed her on the bed. He put down his cheek to hers without a word.

"You are sure it is you, Tom? You have come back to me alive?"

He lifted his head at the low, scared voice, and gazed at her with growing anxiety.

"Of course I have come back! The same bumptious, cantankerous old rascal you have known all your life. Who else should I be?"

She did not smile; she drew a long, moaning sigh.

"It seems so long since I saw you. Was it only this morning you went away?"

"Only this morning."

But though he stoutly affirmed this, he could hardly believe it.

"But," speaking in a low, scared tone, half to herself, "I thought I had murdered you, and papa

and mamma would come home and have to know, and that nothing would ever be the same again."

"Murdered me!" repeated Tom, thoroughly puzzled and alarmed by this time; "I'm not so easily killed as you seem to imagine. Here I stand, no ghost revisiting the glimpses of the moon, but a hundred and fifty pounds of solid bone and muscle at your service. But what an insane idea it all is! What put it into your head, Dollikins?"

"It was Aunt Glenn. I know what she thought."

A few minutes later Tom knocked at Mrs. Grayling's door. She had just risen from her nap.

She greeted her nephew effusively. "I am so glad to see you, Tom! What a frightful storm it has been! Then I had a good deal of a scare about you, lest you might be caught in the gale. My dear boy, I am glad to see you safe and sound."

She looked at him with real fondness. He had never seemed to her quite so much like his father as at that moment.

"Thank you, Aunt Glenn. I *was* out in the gale. It seemed a miracle that I lived through it. But that story will wait. Aunt Glenn, what is the matter with Dorothy?"

"Nothing, I hope."

"But there is — something serious, I fear."

His manner, more than his words, startled Mrs. Grayling.

"Won't you be more explicit, Tom, dear?"

"She is talking and moaning in the most curious way. It is all so unlike her! There is a strange look in her eyes too. She keeps insisting she thought she had murdered me, and says you thought so too. What does it all mean?"

A flash of consciousness came and went in Mrs. Grayling's eyes. Tom caught it.

"Aunt Glenn," he asked almost sternly, "what have you been saying to Dorothy?"

She began to feel alarmed now. But with her usual tact she tried to disguise this. She briefly related Dorothy's visit to her room in the storm.

"I was a good deal frightened myself, Tom, and I may have said something which alarmed her, or which she misinterpreted. One has always to be on guard in dealing with these sensitive natures. Of course I am awfully sorry; but I will see her at once, and set it all right."

Tom eagerly assented. The two went together to Dorothy's room.

As she caught sight of her aunt at the door the girl gave a low, shuddering cry.

"Oh, do go away — please to go away, Aunt Glenn!" she moaned. "I did not mean to kill Tom."

The sight of her face, the wild eyes, the terrified gestures, thoroughly disconcerted Mrs. Grayling. She paused a moment, and then, trying to gather herself together, was advancing to the bedside,

when Tom, who had seen his sister's look and heard her cry, interfered.

"Aunt Glenn, excuse me, but—don't you see? You can do her no good now."

He meant to be courteous; but he spoke with some air of authority, and he looked like his father's son.

Aunt Glenn without a word turned and went.

She regained her own room in a most uncomfortable frame of mind. She was too acute not to perceive all which lay behind her niece's horror of her presence. Her late conduct rose to her now in vivid lights. She had allowed the jealousies and grudges of years to slip their leash, and they had carried her headlong and triumphant their own evil way.

Mrs. Grayling winced internally as she recalled some of her speeches. She felt a sudden access of pity for her niece. What would her father have said if he had seen his child's look, heard her recoiling cry, at sight of his sister's presence? It was Donald's child, and not Grace Dabney's, she thought of now.

A little later the doctor came. He was an old family friend, and of course Dorothy was a pet with him. He looked gravely at the bright young girl who lay there white and helpless, moaning occasionally to herself, or starting up suddenly, and staring with frightened eyes about the room.

He saw at once that the girl had undergone some powerful shock which had prostrated her physically

and mentally. He suspected that behind this, and more or less causing it, lay some prolonged nervous tension.

Tom, listening to the doctor, when the two were alone together, writhed inwardly; for a sudden light smote his memory. Many an irritable mood, many an unkind speech, with a general manner of indifference and aloofness, of which he had been only half conscious at the time, rose before him now.

"What sort of a devil had got into him?" he wondered.

"You think, doctor, she will come out of this in a little while?" he asked greedily.

"I hope — yes, I think so. Her youth and her fine constitution are immense factors in her favor."

"But if things go wrong?"

"Then you insist upon having the possible worst?"

"Yes." The pale young fellow braced himself.

"She will have brain-fever, or what you would dread, perhaps, more than that."

When Tom joined his aunt again, he repeated the doctor's alternative. She was greatly startled and distressed. She tried to express her sympathy, and was profuse in offers of service; but her tactful speech somehow failed her. Even to herself there seemed some false ring in all she said. Tom's face more than his words showed his anxiety. He never once alluded to his experience in the harbor.

"I am simply *de trop* here!" Mrs. Grayling said to herself when she returned to her room, feeling more humiliated than she had ever done in her life.

Her memory did not spare her as she paced the floor. She would have given anything she possessed to recall some of her speeches. She knew that Dorothy was the very apple of her father's eye. How could she ever look him in the face, if what the doctor had hinted as a possibility should come to pass? She wrung her hands, shuddering away from that thought.

The following day Mrs. Grayling received a telegram from home which made her immediate return indispensable. Her husband was seriously ill.

Tom accompanied his aunt to the station. It seemed to her he had grown ten years older. She had not the courage to ask to see her niece.

Tom's reflections that morning had not been of a nature to soften his feelings toward his aunt; but he did pity her at the parting, which was still a great relief to him.

XXXIX

FIRST AND LAST — DOROTHY DRAYCOTT

FIVE days had passed. They had been anxious days at Red Knolls. A chill, a foreboding, haunted the air.

She who had been the life and joy of the household lay silent, nerveless, prostrated. She never complained. To all their questionings she answered that she suffered no pain; but all the high tides of young abounding life were at ebb now. Nothing had power to rouse or interest her. She was only uneasy if Tom were long out of sight. When he returned she clutched his coat-sleeve and devoured him with those big, pathetic, tearless eyes.

Tom Draycott was devotion itself during these days. He cudgelled his brains for stories to tell his sister—stories rife with the fun, spirit, daring, of undergraduate life and gayety. These would once have sent her off into paroxysms of laughter. Now they barely elicited the ghost of a smile. Then he would devise some other method for arresting the current of thoughts which he knew—with a pang which smote to his inmost being—was all setting in one direction, toward one memory.

He often carried Dorothy out on the chamber balcony, and placed her on the cushions among the summer boughs and flowers and birds; but it was not merely a metaphor now when the whole household declared that "within the last days the flesh was dropping from Master Tom's bones."

"I am so tired I can't talk," Dorothy would say in a half-appealing, half-apologetic tone. "You won't be gone long, Tom?"

"Of course I sha'n't! I have made up my mind to try the *rôle* of Prince of Bores. I intend to make a success of it too. I have such a good chance to begin just now, with you. You will be wishing I were at the antipodes before long, Dollikins!"

It was his cue to keep up through all this dark, anxious time the old talk, the habit of jest and chaffing.

The doctor came every day, brought his kindly face, his air of bustling, cheery life, to the bedside; but he looked grave when he went away.

To Tom's anxious questioning he answered, —

"Medicine is beyond her case. We must leave nature to come to the fore. Something may bring her out of it all in a hurry, and it may take months. She has had an awful shock, and soul and body can't react at once."

By this time the doctor had learned from Tom about his narrow escape in the tornado, and the long afternoon of terror which had nearly upset his sister's reason.

During these days Tom Draycott was gaining some self-knowledge, very salt and bitter and good.

While he laid a large share of the responsibility for his sister's condition at Aunt Glenn's door, Tom Draycott did not spare himself.

Dorothy had not once alluded to her aunt. But Tom had seen the look of ineffable relief on the girl's face when she learned of Mrs. Grayling's departure. No words could have been so effective.

Memory flashed now her powerful search-light over the last three weeks. Tom Draycott saw himself — the weaknesses, faults, quicksands, of his nature, as he had never seen them before. He recalled with a thrill of self-loathing the power which Mrs. Grayling had gained over him. How flaccid he had been under her spell! How she had flattered his self-conceit, and amused him by her sarcasms! How he had tried to show off before her, and affected smart speeches and detracting witticisms! Faugh! Tom remembered how he had cherished high ideals, and fancied himself, on the whole, a fine, manly fellow. He had set himself up as a model for Dake Cramley. Why, that boy, with his drunken mother, and his birth and bringing-up of the slums, was worth a dozen of him!

But what filled Tom Draycott with boundless surprise, shook his young confidence in himself to the roots of his being, was to perceive that a disturbing alienating influence, an intriguing woman, who, with

all her attractions, must have had some small spite to gratify, had come between him and Dorothy, his own sister, with whom he had grown up, whose every thought and feeling he had shared from the time when she pattered by his side in the grass at Red Knolls and they made sand-pies together.

"I shall carry my self-disgust through life," said the poor fellow. "A troglodyte would have seen farther! A brute would have behaved better than I did to Dollikins!"

At the end of five days Mrs. Dayles, tearing herself away in response to Tom's telegram, appeared. When Dorothy caught sight of the small familiar figure in the doorway, she lifted her head from the pillow, and stretched out her arms.

"O my darling, what have they been doing to you?" exclaimed Mrs. Dayles, as she saw the changed white face.

"If you had been here it would never have happened," whispered the girl as she clung to her friend.

Then Mrs. Dayles might have exclaimed, "Oh my prophetic soul — Aunt Glenn!" She had been uneasy ever since she learned of Mrs. Grayling's advent at Red Knolls. The quiet, simple woman meeting the proud, brilliant one a few times had fathomed the real character under all the brilliance and graciousness.

That night Tom and Mrs. Dayles sat alone to-

gether after dinner. It was very warm, and the lights in the room burned dim.

“Do tell me all about it, Tom!”

Mrs. Dayles had said the words in precisely that tone many a time when he was a rollicking, careless boy, and had got into some trouble with his fun or his mischief.

Tom felt like that boy once more. He drew a low seat in front of her. He began to speak of Mrs. Grayling's visit. But the brief sentences and the forced reserves confirmed his hearer's worst suspicions.

Tom Draycott could not forget he was speaking of his father's sister, even when he admitted that her visit to Red Knolls had signally failed to bring happiness to anybody. Dorothy had suffered the most. It was largely his fault; no doubt Aunt Glenn had just fascinated him.

“She would almost any man, if she really set out to charm him,” interposed Mrs. Dayles, with a little note of indignation in her voice.

“Poor Dollikins!” continued Tom. “She had a hard time between us. I treated her shamefully sometimes.”

“O Tom!”

“Yes, it's true. I don't deserve your pity. It isn't pleasant for a fellow to look back and see he has made a cad of himself.”

A few minutes later the talk had changed. There

were no more interjections from his hearer, who shuddered as she listened. Tom was relating for the first time his experience in the harbor. He told it in short, salient sentences, each one of which was instinct with the feeling and peril of the time. While he talked, Tom Draycott was living it all over again. The storm was thundering about him; the livid, hungry waves were yawning for him; he was looking death in the face once more.

When he had finished he laid his head in Mrs. Dayles's lap. She heard two or three sharp sobs.

“My poor boy!”

It was all she could say amid her tears.

Just before they began talking a light figure had entered the alcove and flung itself on the lounge. The maid, supposing Dorothy still slept, had gone into the next room, leaving the door ajar. The girl awoke and grew restless in the silence and solitude. In a little while she rose, and for the first time since her illness stole down the stairs, and threw herself on a lounge in the alcove.

In a few moments Tom and Mrs. Dayles entered the larger adjoining room. The portières were drawn apart. Dorothy, motionless on her lounge, could hear every syllable which Tom said to Mrs. Dayles. At last the girl rose and glided away, softly as a spirit.

But Dorothy Draycott did not return to her room that night as she had left it. There was a glow of

amazement, gratitude, joy, in her face. Her eyes were radiant; her lips trembled. Then there swept over all a great healing, blessed storm of tears.

When Tom went up to his sister's room that night, she drew his head down to hers and whispered, —

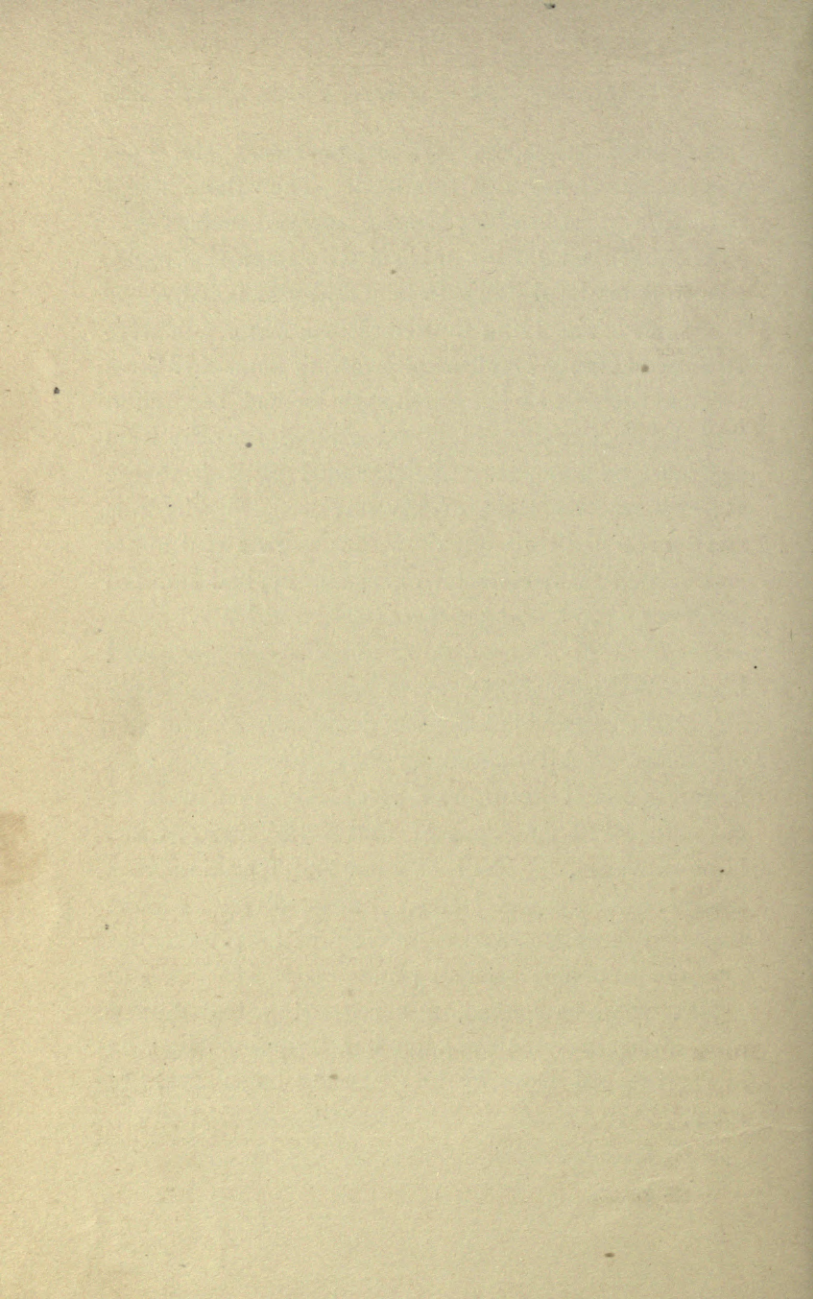
“Tom, I was lying in the alcove while you were talking to Nanty Dayles. *I heard all you said!*”

Tom lifted his head as though he had been shot. The doctor had charged him to shield Dorothy from the least excitement. Neither had alluded to the storm since the night of his return. Dorothy was not sure he had been out in it; but a few awful hours had burned themselves into her memory, had haunted her imagination, and paralyzed soul and body.

She drew Tom's head down quickly; she devoured his face with her sweet, warm kisses.

“Don't be troubled for me, dear,” she said in her old tones. “All the misery has gone. I can't be unhappy now I know how you were given back to me — to all of us — out of that awful storm, those hungry waves. I shall be glad and thanking God every day so long as I live. I'm tired now; I want to go to sleep. To-morrow you will find the old Dorothy has come back to you.”

But when he looked in her glowing, tear-stained face, in her radiant eyes, on her tremulous lips, he knew the old Dorothy had already come back to them.



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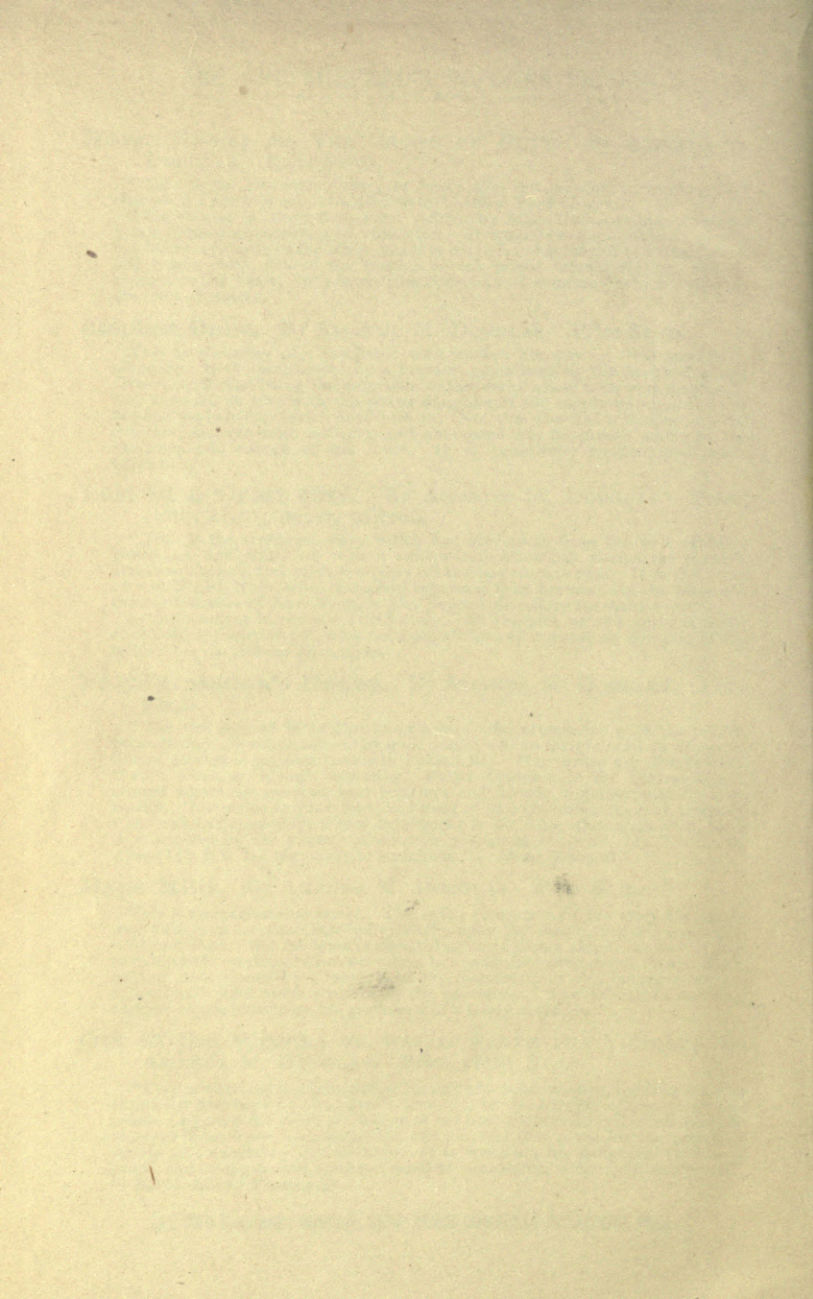
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